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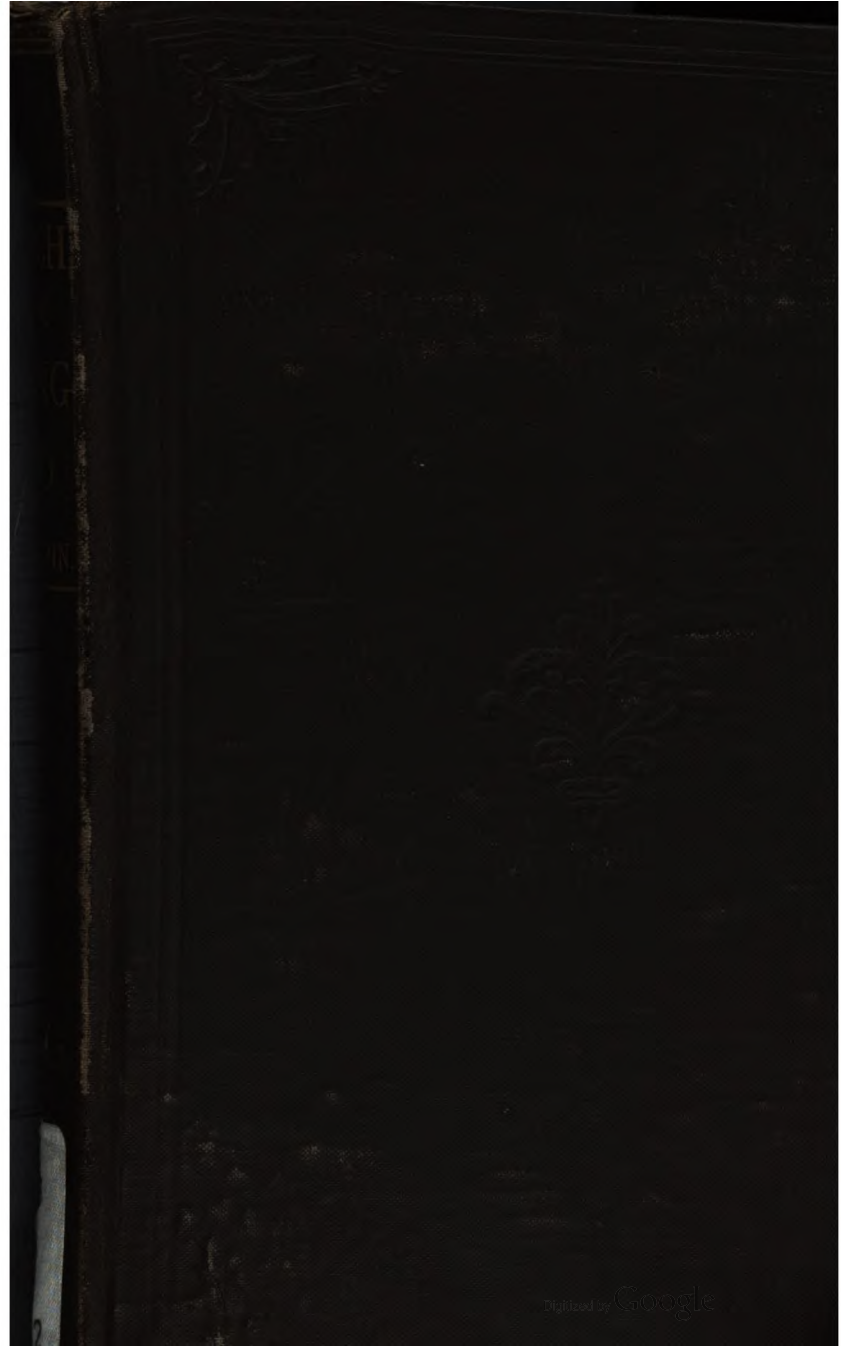
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THE
CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

AND
OTHER SERMONS.

Edwin Hubbell BY
REV. E. H. CHAPIN, DD.,
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE DIVINE PATERNITY.

NEW YORK :
JAMES MILLER, PUBLISHER,
779 BROADWAY.
1881.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTICE.

THE first of the following sermons of the lamented divine was issued in pamphlet form a few years ago, and in obedience to the wishes of many of his parishioners, it is now reproduced in a more enduring shape, together with others of equal merit.

The publisher would take this occasion to state that it was the intention of the lamented author, many times expressed, to revise and edit an edition of his works whenever sufficient time could be spared to devote to it, but unfortunately, the opportunity never presented itself.

In giving this volume to the public, the publisher trusts that it will meet with a cordial welcome from the many thousand admirers of the gifted and distinguished pulpit orator.

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THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD.

A SERMON BY REV. E. H. CHAPIN, D.D., PREACHED
BEFORE THE GRADUATING CLASS OF TUFTS DIVIN-
ITY SCHOOL, SUNDAY, JUNE 9TH, 1878.

"THE church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—1 TIMOTHY 3 : 15.

THESE words are addressed to a young minister of the Gospel. I need not say that "the pastoral epistles," as their title imports, are loaded with specific counsels as to work and duty which are needed by all ministers, old or young. At the present time, however, I do not propose to dwell upon these details, but to call your attention to the central fact which stands before us in the text. We are told that these things were written to Timothy that he might know how to conduct himself in "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The object, then, for which all these instructions are given—that vital organism, that church of which Timothy was, and of which every minister of the Gospel is held to be, a representative and a servant—seems to me a subject well worthy of our consideration here and now. As the physician knows the absolute value of his science, or as the engineer is sure of the solid basis of his tasks, so in this world of

many claims and multiform pursuits the Christian minister needs to comprehend not only the specific methods of his work, but its enduring reality and its paramount interest.

In proceeding, then, to speak of the Christian Church, I shall take for granted two or three things. In the first place, I shall assume that you do not expect a full treatment of so large a subject. I intend to speak of the church only in reference to a few points involved with certain movements of the present day.

In the next place, I adopt that interpretation of the text which is approved by the best critics. Agreeably to this interpretation it is the *church* which is referred to here—not Timothy, nor directly that special truth of “the mystery of Godliness” of which the writer speaks in the next verse. I take it to be the church that is “the pillar and ground of the truth.” And once more, without any elaborate argument, I shall assume that, in its external phase at least, the church is no single, homogeneous body, having a special name and organization. The questions, “Which is the true church?” and “And what are the marks by which the true church may be known?” are questions fruitful with controversy. I simply deny that there is any
✓ dogmatic criterion by which any body of Christians may be infallibly known as exclusively *the* true church. The argument here is an argument in a circle. We are told that “this or that is the true church because it teaches the true doctrine.” But when we ask, “How do we know that what it teaches *is* the true doctrine?” the answer is, “Because it is taught by the true church,” or “It is asserted that the doctrine is true because it is according to Scripture.” But who is the infallible interpreter of Scripture? Or if we take the purely Protestant ground and say that in this matter

each holds the right of private judgment, then we must concede the *complete* exercise of that right. But, as the legitimate result of this right, there will be *various* opinions.

Furthermore, we do not find any single body of believers that can assert an exclusive claim to be "the true church," because of the *unanimity* with which it has been accepted. For no church ever *has* been unanimously accepted. "Even in the first centuries there never was a universal or catholic church, in the strict acceptation of the word." "There is no period in ecclesiastical history," says a writer, "in which dissent has appeared under so many denominations as in the earliest."

We do not find, then, that any single body or organization of Christians can arrogate the claim to be "the church," so far as that claim is assumed to rest upon any standard of dogma or ritual.

And yet there *is* a church that has existed in every age since Christ came, and has extended into every region of the earth. It is limited to no sect, but comprehends the entire mass of Christian believers. It is characterized by no exclusive ceremonial, but by the manifestation of true spiritual life acting under all forms, and even without any fixed form. It holds a wide diversity of intellectual views, and yet it is rooted in one common ground—in the unity of a living faith in Jesus. Composed of many organisms, it nevertheless reaches beyond all visible organisms far within the confines of that invisible church whose seat is in every devout heart and in every holy life. It may be impossible to stake out its boundaries—it may be unjust to determine them—but the church *is* wherever in the world Christianity is at work as a divine force.

Perhaps it is not possible to delineate the exact

✓ features of the church. But if some clearness of apprehension upon the present occasion is desirable, if we must try to define it in words, I do not know that we can do so in language more satisfactory than that with which ✓ Giesler introduces his history of the church. "The Christian Church is a religious moral society, cemented together by a common faith in Christ, and which seeks to represent in its united life the kingdom of God announced by Christ. This kingdom it hopes to see at one time realized, and strives to prepare itself for becoming worthy to have a part in it." I assume, then, that the Christian Church is a *broad* church, comprehending all true believers in Jesus—every good and faithful man, every earnest and living sect. Its unity is not of ritual or dogma, but "the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace," having, under divers expressions, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all."

✓ And now, having attempted in this way to define what the church is, let me proceed to say something of its claims and its work amidst the movements of the present day, as "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

I. In the first place, then, I observe that the church bears testimony to a truth—to a *special Truth*—and in this relation it may be termed "the pillar of the truth." It is a pillar of *testimony*. That truth is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Of that revelation the church holds the record, maintains the verity, and illustrates the power. The church itself is a witness that such a revelation has been given. For no institution stands upon nothing. It represents some idea. It has crystallized around some fact. It may, indeed, represent a *false* idea. It may stand upon the perversion

of a fact. But to some kind of idea, to some shape of fact, that institution bears testimony. It did not spring out of nothing. It does not stand upon nothing.

We trace this body of Christian believers through past ages, until we reach a period when it did not exist. What caused it to exist? Out of what conditions did it spring? It carries along from age to age the *record* of these conditions. It bears witness to the New Testament account of its own origin. It is itself an abiding evidence to the authenticity of that account. We may try this evidence by negative and positive tests.

In the first place, if the New Testament does not furnish a satisfactory account of the origin of the Christian Church, nothing else does. The assertion, directly or virtually, that the church bears witness to no such fact as it claims, but only to something which is little more than a fable, is an absurd assertion. Such an institution as the Christian Church, with the earnest convictions and the moral impulse which it poured into the world, never grew out of anything like a fable.

Or, if we assume that there never was an actual personality such as that to which the church bears witness, and upon which it is founded—that this is only an *ideal* life, which, by a process of mythical evolution, has been developed from a slender reality into that which stands on the pages of the Gospel—we may well ask, how has this accretion crystallized into such harmony, and produced an ideal that satisfies the loftiest conceptions of all ages and all men?

Theodore Parker—who will not be accused of undue bias on the positive side of the Gospel record—has said, “Measure the religious doctrine of Jesus by that of the time he lived in, or that of any time or any place. Yes, by the doctrine of eternal truth. Con-

sider what a work his words and deeds have wrought in the world. Remember that the greatest minds have seen no farther, and have added nothing to the *doctrine* of religion ; that the richest hearts have felt no deeper, and added nothing to the *sentiment* of religion ; have set no loftier aim, no truer method than his, of perfect love to God and man. Measure him by the shadow he has cast into the world—no, by the light he has cast upon it. Shall we be told that such a man never lived? the whole story is a lie? Suppose that Plato and Newton never lived. But who did their works and thought their thoughts? It takes a Newton to forge a Newton. What man could have fabricated a Jesus? None but a Jesus.”

If such a person could not have been fabricated, or even mythically evolved within the time when we *must* admit the existence of our written records, we are driven upon the positive test that such a Being did live and teach and act—and the church stands firm as a pillar of testimony to that divine manifestation in Jesus Christ.

Moreover, while the church preserves the record and maintains the verity of this revelation, it also illustrates its power. Again, taking the church as it stands to-day—an undeniable, existing institution—and tracing back we come once more upon the fact to which it ascribes its origin. I need not say what a remarkable period that was in the history of mankind. An exhausted world, a troubled world, a world lying in the sad twilight of an eclipse. A season of failing faith and superstitious folly ; a time whose customs we may not describe—cruel and licentious customs, not existing, mind you, as now, in *spite* of religion, but as the concomitants of religion ; a time when life was but an epicurean festival and death an endless

sleep. And then, suddenly, a new era emerging from the old—a sharp, distinct furrow breaking up the surface of history, new ideas, a new faith, a new life. An evident *transformation*—in its rapidity, depth, and thoroughness, really a miracle of transformation. There is no effect without a cause. And for such a stupendous effect as this there must have been a special cause. Where can we find such a cause? In the conditions of the old world, just alluded to? The facilities for a new faith, prepared in the minds and the hearts of men? But even the ingenuity of Gibbon can make of these little more than *conditions*. They do not supply the impelling stroke—the initial energy of the movement. I freely accept the idea of evolution in history. Doubtless we may trace the germs of the French Revolution, for instance—the train of preparations—far back of that crisis. But do we not also discern specific causes—organic points of explosion—for that convulsion which tore the social world asunder, and whose influences are vibrating still? So those pre-existing conditions of Christianity may assume a providential attitude as *preparations* for the force that should seize and control them. But whence the force itself? It cannot be found in any form of the mythical theory. In the words of Edgar Quinet :

“How could this despoiled Christ . . . this wandering Ghost in tradition, have influenced all the time which has elapsed since? I see the moral world shaken, but the *Primum Mobile* escapes me! . . . Did I know nothing of the Scriptures, and were the name of Jesus effaced from the earth, I should still suppose that there has been somewhere an Omnipotent impulse about the time of the Roman emperors.” “The miracle of Christianity” is not the cures recorded in the gospels, “but rather the prodigy of

humanity extended on its sick-couch, there cured of the leprosy of castes, of the blindness of pagan sensuality, and which, suddenly rising, walks far from the threshold of the old world."

In this age, then, when a destructive criticism dissolves, or tries to dissolve, in its "relentless crucible" so many assumed facts and personages of history—when the story of William Tell fades into a legend, and Joan of Arc is encircled with doubtful flames, and we are told that "Shakespeare never wrote Shakespeare"—let the young minister and servant of the church stand calmly by this pillar of testimony, his mind convinced and his heart warmed—as they must be if he is to do any efficient work—by the assurance that he preaches a real gospel and an historical, personal Jesus. That church stands yet, an unimpeached witness to the revelation of God in Christ, and the operation of that truth in the earth. Divine in its origin like the creative act in the material world, like the procedure of the material world since the creation it now works by ordinary laws and in human conditions. It is advanced by human instrumentalities. It is distorted by human errors. It is hindered by human sins. And yet it manifestly triumphs, as an intrinsic power, through these instrumentalities. It dissipates these errors. It melts away these sins. It evidently acts as a special truth, a divine force, in the world. It changes customs. It moulds manners. It works into laws. It springs up into beneficent institutions. It transfigures the lives of men. It survives the wreck of dynasties. It abases the proud. It exalts the humble. It reveals the worth of humanity. It gives to the lowliest a faith that is more glorious than a crown, a dignity grander than coronation robes. Even when invoked for evil, it serves the good. Its mystic cross,

borne aloft on banners of conquest and war, carries a significance deeper than the purpose of the hour, and breeds a spirit that shall cancel the curse of war and consecrate all victories.

And, with all the rest, it is the only hope of the wise and the good when the heavens are dark with fearful omens, and the earth, as now, is troubled with the schemes of men. It carries truth that the sick and sorrowing and sinning heart of man needs, and under all the glory of external things, and under all the pomps of civilization, always will need.

Above the white reef of graves, above the silent sea of death, it spreads its arch of promise, and around the perplexing problem of evil throws the grand solution of "God in Christ reconciling *all* things unto himself."

II. I have been speaking of the church as the witness, the pillar of testimony to a *special* truth. In the next place, let me refer to it as in a certain sense the *ground of all truth*. Those who deny the Pauline authorship of the First Epistle of Timothy find in the expression the "Ground of the Truth" a note of development—an ecclesiastical expansion of, if not an absolute departure from, the genuine assertion of Paul in I. Corinthians that "Jesus Christ is the foundation." But this criticism appears to me somewhat pedantic. Unquestionably, Jesus is the substance of the truth of the Gospel, and in this primal sense is the *ground* of that truth. But it is consistent with this to affirm that the church as the vehicle which *holds* and *bears up* the truth before the world is also the "ground of the truth."

And, as I have just suggested, there is a sense in which the church is not only the "ground of the

special truth" which characterizes the New Testament, but, as it rests upon, so, in turn, it enshrines—or, I might say, incarnates—the ultimate verity which exists behind all forms of truth, behind the visible facts which science explores and the invisible things which faith apprehends. Thus it affirms an "Eternal and Immutable Morality," enthroned above the fluctuations of expediency and the caprice of self-will—a reality of Spiritual Being from which all life springs forth—and so authenticates conscience, vindicates prayer, explains the order of the physical world, and interprets the aspirations of the human soul.

I need not say that this assertion of the church is in our day sharply challenged. Nor will I enter to any extent upon a field which is so familiarly trodden, and so pregnant with controversy. And yet, upon an occasion like this, I can hardly help alluding to the at least apparent "antagonism between Science and Faith." But certainly I shall make no attempt at discussion, and only offer a few points of suggestion.

Let me observe, then, that the Christian minister must not underrate the magnitude of the issues. They open into the deepest problems of being. They are arterial questions, compared with which our sectarian controversies are only skin deep. They reach far beyond points of textual criticism, or even of historical Christianity. It may be true that there may be "no more real materialism" in the convictions of men than there ever was, but it is certain that "there is more expression of materialistic thought." The materialist, so called, no more in deference to orthodox reputation hampers his facts with ingenious but disingenuous qualifications. He rides boldly into the lists, and touches the shield of Faith with the *point* of the lance.

And *this* also is certain : the facts of science cannot

be cancelled. Therefore, in relation to the great interests of religion, they must be adjusted. And thus arise these questions : Are Faith and Science to be reconciled, or are they to be set over, the one against the other, in an irrepressible conflict? Is this great world of nature—this boundless, star-lighted theatre of action in which we live and move—godless, or is it divine? Are these countless forms of being that crowd upon our vision in this teeming summer-time tokens of a power if not hostile at least alien to our deepest trusts, or are they symbols and expressions of those great realities to which our consciousness bears witness and responds? Is this “longing after immortality” only “a pleasing hope, a fond desire,” or is it a prophecy? Shall we live forever, or shall we be resolved to indistinguishable atoms when this earth itself shall be but a cinder—a dead sarcophagus of the dead, whirled “blind and blackening” around the sun? These questions themselves are as old as human thought, but, I repeat, they meet us to-day with an intensity and a persistence which more than ever demands solution or adjustment. I believe they will find an explanation in which religion will emerge with renewed freshness and reality. But they are questions which in no way are to be shirked or paltered with. The church, as assuming to be the “ground of truth,” must try them by the simple truth.

But also let it be remembered that they who maintain the affirmations of the church are not merely the defendants in this trial. We may rightfully ask, what is this authority that challenges convictions so long, so widely, so deeply held? These conclusions which are paraded as complete and final facts, are they after all so fixed and certain that they absolutely determine any question as to divine revelation? There are points

upon which it would seem that one department of physical investigation checks and qualifies another. Mr. Darwin, assuming limitless geological ages, finds room, in their cycles, for his "Variation of Species." Mr. Thompson, on the other hand, studying the age of the sun's fire, asserts that there is quite a definite limit to the geological ages. The aggressive cordon that is to sweep the universe clear of spiritual facts must in itself be unanimous.

And, in this computation, what *are* facts? The naturalist verifies the objects of his senses and his reason, and calls them "facts." But the Christian believer, in his own consciousness, has the same evidence of "facts." The geologist is not more confident as to the trilobite in the rock, or the astronomers as to Sirius in the sky, than is the devout soul as to communion with its Saviour and its God. The philosopher points his telescope, or arranges his microscope, and tells what God has done in the world *without*—in the glittering armies of heaven, or the infusorial myriad fold throbbing with the universal life. But the mourner takes the lens of faith, and gazing through the broken tomb of Jesus, commands the horizon of the immortal world. Through the clear-shining of his tears the penitent looks into his own heart, and in the illumination of divine love beholds new hopes, new purposes, new possibilities, quickened in the transfiguration of a regenerated life. He *knows* in whom he has believed. He *knows* what Christ has done for his soul. He *knows* into what an atmosphere he mounts by prayer. He *knows* what faith enables him to do and to endure, what light it sheds upon his daily path, and what explanation it gives of the vicissitudes of life. Each having his own checks of reason and experience, why should he whose facts are ranged upon one plane of being sur-

render to him whose facts are ranged on another? Indeed, dogmatism and assumption are confined to no party or profession. The materialist, in his way, is as intolerant as the churchman or the priest. There is a bigotry that arms itself with the crucible and the microscope, as there is a bigotry armed with the crozier and the creed. He is no more disloyal to reason who would cover the testimony of the rocks, or the stars, with a screen of tradition, than he who draws around the facts of the visible world a veil of sensuous limitation. A comprehensive philosophy will not repress the motions of our consciousness, any more than a comprehensive faith will thwart the inductions of our reason. It is startling to find how absolutely baseless is the structure of an exclusive materialism. I know not who may fall under this term. For even those to whom the term may seem applicable confess a supersensual reality in the very facts which they ignore. In the last analysis they halt before a mystery. The philosophical materialist of our day is akin to the Roman poet,

“Who dropped his plummet down the broad,
Deep universe, and said, ‘No God!’
Finding no bottom.”

Strange what subtle substitutions men will urge merely to escape the conviction of a Divine Being in the universe. Strange that they should invent such hypotheses to exclude from the realms of things the one fact which alone explains things—that one fact of which, of all others, they themselves are the most intensely conscious—the fact of an Intelligent Will.

It is not for him who accepts the spiritual interpretation of life and nature to affirm or fear any real antagonism between the world within us and the world without. It is not according to the wisdom of Him who

revealed God in all things—who suggested the Divine Omnipresence in the secret chambers of the earth, and the Divine Energy in the seed that becomes, we know not how, “the full corn in the ear,” and unfolds in more than regal splendor in the lily of the field. The work of nature displayed in all these forms of being is not merely *analogous* to the Divine Word—the work of nature *is* the Divine Word.

But if between Science and Faith, Religion publishes no divorce, neither need he who accepts the church’s affirmation as the “ground of truth” shrink from any process that threatens to resolve all things into a primeval *unity*; confident that this germinal fact is lodged not in “the potentiality of matter,” but in the treasury of infinite mind. It is the idolater of materialism who is haunted by a spectre that “will not down”—the spectre of a supernatural intrusion that shatters his compact limitations, even as Christ dissolved the physical impossibility suggested by Nicodemus by the rift and inlet of a spiritual law.

And here let me make a practical suggestion based upon this unity of truth. No exhortation to the young minister is more common than that he should “study the Bible.” But this does not imply mere textual study. We are studying the Bible when we study any truth. That live Scripture is to be read, and learned, and applied in the presence of all nature and all history. We must carry its light into the world around us, and come back with our knowledge and experience to find in it fresher reality and profounder depths of meaning.

III. But I proceed to observe that this is “the church of the *living* God.” Not only does it bear witness to a special truth—not only does it affirm all Truth—it is also the vehicle of divine life. Fitly may

we be reminded on "Whitsunday," that carries our thoughts back to the days of the infant church and the visible tokens of its baptism in those "cloven tongues like as of fire," of that promise of a Divine Presence, an indwelling power, that was to be *always* with it—yes, and with every true member of it—even unto the end of the world. In that great hour it was a visible church, a united church, and they who composed it "were all with one accord in one place." Since that hour, its members have been far from "one accord" in intellectual vision, and have been scattered wide through the earth. And yet the substance of that accord abides—limited to no single organism, comprehended in no exclusive creed—wherever divine truth is, wherever Christian faithfulness is, wherever holy love and zeal prevail. This church comprehends all that is true in the past, all that is right in the present, all that is good in the future. It is a church of wisdom, of freedom, and of love. Not merely an historical church—a church of the advent—not merely a formal church—a church of the sepulchre, but the church of One "who has gone before." The church of the Resurrection, the church of the Ascension, the church of the Holy Spirit—"the church of the living God." As such this church lives and acts. It survives all assaults, abides under all changes, works under divers forms. Its terms are faithfulness to spiritual conviction; its witness is the communication of divine life to the soul of man.

But while under this definition all faithful souls have belonged and do belong to this church, let us by no means infer that its unity is monotonous, or that the terms of its fellowship are terms of intellectual surrender. Unity is the antithesis of monotony—it is the consummation of diversity.

Nor can spiritual faithfulness for one moment abide with indifference to conviction or compromise of the truth. The deepest unity of the church may be "unity of the Spirit," but that unity is appreciated only by those to whom convictions are precious and sacred. This unity is not the unity of mere *sentiment*, or, if so, it is sentiment that has been wrought through reason and precipitated by thought. Therefore, consistent with all that I have said of the essential oneness of the Christian Church, is my exhortation to you who are to go forth as ministers of the Gospel, as the warrant of your rightful place in Christ's church, to be faithful to your convictions, and, as the very condition of any final unity, to proclaim distinctly and boldly that which has been accepted by you not as a tradition, not as a popular faith, but as that which has come to your souls as the truth of the living God.

In implying that the interpretation of the Gospel to which, by your presence here, you give assent is not a *popular* faith, I may not seem sufficiently aware that, although as Universalists we have made no change of *latitude*, there is decidedly a change of *climate*, and we may be in danger of being too popular.

I need not dilate upon the extraordinary transformation that has passed over the theological world. With a few verbal qualifications, thinking men in all the sects have come to the conclusion that while there may possibly be an endless something that is evil, it is *not* endless misery. At least, the entire substance and sting of the doctrine of endless punishment has been extracted and cast aside. The bars have been loosened and the coals have dropped out. Nothing is left but a mere formal grating of abstract propositions. We have been lifted from the blaze of vindictive fire into the *thin ether* of metaphysics, and left to vindicate our

faith in view of some inconceivable perversity of the human will. And let us not neglect the illustration furnished by our fathers in the faith. Without any great learning or critical apparatus, guided by clear reason and the deep instincts of the human heart in simple loyalty to convictions, they affirmed this so-called "heresy," until now we see this apparent element of discord dissolving into an element of unity.

But this view of the divine government is to be valued not chiefly as a dogma, but as an *influence*—a transforming power—the power not of mere logical assurance, but of the infinite love of God in the soul of man. With this conviction of the evangelical efficacy of the truth you hold, go forth to your chosen field of labor. And let each proceed, under God, to work in his own way. For this Sunday of "the Holy Spirit" reminds us also of "a diversity of gifts." There is no exclusive form of Christian work. Its departments are various, and its field is wide. There is no single standard of preaching. The church of the living God has had efficient workers with methods as diverse as Bishop Butler and George Whitefield, as Ballou and Channing. The best work in the pulpit has been wrought through "a diversity of gifts," the natural powers of different men consecrated to their great work and solemnly in earnest. Minute directions as to style and manner, therefore, are practically useless. It may, in some sense, be true that "the style is the man," but it is at least equally true that the man is the style.

Again, as ministers of the church—as ambassadors of the living God—I beseech you to magnify your office. It is not probable that many of you will work in high places or achieve conspicuous names. But the great work of the world is not done in high places or by conspicuous names. It is by the faithfulness of

humble atoms that the globe lives and moves. Through hidden veins flows the deepest life. And it is in lowly places that Christ's spirit—as of old did Christ himself—walks to help and heal and save. And yet, I say, magnify your office—not *yourselves*, but your work. For what a work it is! Its greatness may not be a greatness that appears like achievements wrought on canvas or in marble. But its intrinsic importance, its enduring result, far transcends these. It deals with souls made in the image, participating in the life of God. It works upon these imperishable textures to enlighten and console, to convert and to save. Humble, secret as that work may be, like the secret influence working now in the heart of nature, by God's help it is your privilege to do more—ah! yes, to do far otherwise than philosophers with their inverted ritual of “humanity;” than statesmen with their diplomacies and their cannon; than visionary socialists whose promised dawn is streaked with blood; than partisans blowing the coals of civil strife and playing with the dynamite of anarchy.

Finally, I exhort you to remember that your work will be truly efficient, only as you yourselves are not merely ministers but living members of the church, and as your hearts and soul are held in constant communion with the living God and with his Christ. The secret of Christian power, of the deepest power, is not intellectual ability or vast knowledge, valuable as those conditions are, but the soul glowing with the love of Jesus, and wafted by “the breath and ventilation” of the Holy Spirit. This is the substance of Christian life, invisibly binding together in one those who seem divided now—as will be found when, walking the streets of the New Jerusalem, these veils will drop away and we shall see face to face.

My young brethren, my hearers all, may you and I, by that fellowship with Jesus, by that indwelling of the Spirit, be indeed members of that far-extended communion which is "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" !

THE THREE ADVENTS.

A SERMON BY REV. E. H. CHAPIN, D.D.

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.”—EPHESIANS
iii. 17.

THE Advent of Christ may be considered as a three-fold fact,—or, perhaps, we may more properly speak of Three Advents. The first of these was that event which during the present week is celebrated by Christian churches and by Christian communities all over the world. It was the coming of Christ upon the earth, the entrance into the sphere of visible and material things of a divine and spiritual revelation. It was not a contradiction of the physical order of the world that had prevailed since the creation, but an interpretation of it ; a higher and fuller meaning ; the personal manifestation of a power and truth and love comprehending, but also transcending, nature. The veil which man had not been able to lift was drawn aside ; and in “the Image of the Invisible God” he saw the expression of a tenderness and a solicitude beyond all that he had discerned in the universe around him. All that was confirmed which had been witnessed by “rain,” and by “fruitful seasons,”—all that which the heavens

had declared. But there was a deeper significance, a clearer revelation in the angelic chorus of "Glory to God in the highest."

But not only do we recognize the Advent of Christ in the material world—in the world of nature. We also discern his advent in history,—in the world of social facts and movements. Explain it as we may, it cannot be denied that since the coming of Jesus there has been a vast and progressive change in society,—a change which, whatever may be rightfully referred to other agencies in its best and most hopeful elements, can be traced directly to him. It has been truly said that "the world can never be the same after" that Advent "as it was before it, as it would be without it." The distinctive boundary lines of ancient and modern history meet just at that point of time on which Jesus stands. There is a life, a spirit, an expression in the world since that time that it did not show before that time.

Of course no one denies the elements of progress that have been in existence ever since the world began. It has been continually in movement. There never was an age in which there has not been an advance upon the ruder and earlier stages of the world. Let any man read the page of history with the most careless eye, and he will discern the difference as readily as he does between a barren and a fruitful land, between the rugged mountain and the fruitful valley, the boundary line which separates Christianity from former religions. In the words of Bunsen, Christ is "no *product* of the ancient world, yet its consummation ; no mere Herald of the new world, but its abiding Archetype, the peren-

nial well-spring of life to humanity through the spirit." Whatever men have attained in science, or achieved in art ; by whatever systems of social philosophy, or instruments of material power, they have this vast and complicated product which we call "civilization,"—it cannot be doubted that that which inspired and continues to inspire the noblest efforts, and sanctifies all agencies to the best uses, is that conviction of spiritual realities, of divine love and human brotherhood, which has been wrought into the minds and the hearts of men by the teachings, and even more than these by the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

If civilization is something more than material gain or political aggrandizement ; if its ultimate benefit appears in the uplifting and advancement of human souls ; in the sundering of the spiritual fetters of which outward bonds are but the seals and symbols ; in the conscientious breaking down of selfish limitations, and every tendency towards narrowness and meanness and grossness of life ; in every tendency towards a practical recognition of human unity, and towards knitting the world together in one great commonwealth of mutual blessings ; in every movement of the nations that secures for each man and for all men a larger sphere of right, and therefore of moral opportunities ; in every revolution that destroys the name and power of slavery ; in every rising wave of public opinion that condemns cruelty, vengeance, and brutal war ; in every increase of tender ministration and human regard, of just charity and charitable justice, as well as in everything that brings human nature more into the light and nearer to

the life of God ; if we rate civilization, not merely by the multiplicity of material productions as agencies of physical power, but by aspects and results like these, then was the coming of Him who taught and revealed the love of God, the brotherhood of man, the value of the individual soul, *the* Advent in history. And wherever those instances combine which really make events ; whenever men are made better as well as stronger ; whenever a real victory is given for truth and love, for conscience and humanity,—still may we discern the unfolding of the Advent of Him around whose cradle the lofty and the lowly, wise men and shepherds knelt ; and because of whose coming the heavenly hosts with a sublime fitness also sung, “ On earth peace, good will towards men.”

But there is still another Advent of Christ in which these that I have now referred to are, so to speak, realized and completed. And that is the Advent of Christ in the *individual soul*. Here is a peculiar characteristic of Christianity. The Author and Finisher of our faith is not like the founders of other systems,—merely an objective teacher or lawgiver, or a leader in external and material conquests, carrying the kingdom of God with the sharp edge of the sword. He is an inward Saviour—the indwelling source of spiritual life. The profoundest result of Christ’s Advent is marked by an intimate connection between Jesus and the soul of the believer. And this fact is expressed and insisted upon throughout the New Testament. “ If a man love me,” says Christ, “ he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make

our abode with him." "I in them and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in One." The apostle Paul takes up and reiterates the truth. "I am crucified with Christ," he says, "nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." So in the words of the text, writing to the Ephesian disciples, he tells them that he prays "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Surely, then, though it is not a material event, though it takes place in no outward form, this coming of Christ into the private individual soul is an Advent, and to him who experiences it, it is the most complete, the most real Advent.

It is the primary fact in that process of Christian character which the apostle here sets before us. I hardly know that outside of the prayers of Christ there is a more sublime petition than that which the apostle here utters, recognizing the one kingdom in heaven and earth ; and prays that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith : that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he might be filled with all the fullness of God." Here is the consummate result of the Advent ; here is the prayer which leads to that consummation, out of which all other results must grow—the coming of Christ into the individual soul. It was a prayer for those early converts—those Ephesian disciples to whom he wrote ; and is equally a prayer for you and me to-day as it was in the primitive age of Christianity. It is an Advent as needful now as it was then. Let us, then,

regarding the relations of Christ to the individual soul, consider,

I. THE CONDITIONS OF THE ADVENT.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith requires *an earnest belief in Christ*. I observe that this belief must be as specific as the Advent, not a mere historic belief; not a languid acknowledgment of the fact that Christ has come into the world. Probably most people are ready to do this, however they may vary in their estimate of Jesus. And whatever they may be disposed to allow to the demands of modern criticism, most people will say that such a being as Christ walked the earth, or a being possessing his characteristics, set forth on the pages of the evangelists. In fact, the reality of Christ in history is necessary to common sense and the interpretation of events. The idea that men could have constructed an ideal Christ, a "Christ of consciousness," and that they have been wrought upon by its influence, is certainly absurd. It would take a Jesus to forge Jesus! If any man could forge Jesus, he must be Jesus himself. There must be such a Person, and the historical reality of things require us to admit that.

But while this may account for the phenomena of Christianity, it does not account for the fact that Christ has been the ideal and the sustenance of so many souls. It is not enough for Christ to stand before them upon the distant lapse of history that runs back nineteen hundred years ago. But in order to explain how Christ has been the sustenance of souls, that historical fact

should, in what it involves, have been something more than a mere historical fact ; in some way he must have entered into those souls and taken possession of those hearts ; in some way his spirit must have been a controlling element of their lives. We may admire the wisdom of Socrates, or the glory of a hero like Alexander. We may study the lives of great men, and sympathize with them in their struggles. But that deep and all-pervading control that Christ has, is something *more* than an historical fact, or while it *confirms* the historical fact.

Again, a mere conventional or traditional acquiescence is not the kind of faith that is required, an acquiescence by which men are called Christians in the sense in which we are a Christian community. There is a Christ of society. There is a Christ that is generally respected in the outward world. When a man has gone so far as to blaspheme the name of Christ, he is held in contempt and horror. Men who occasionally use profane language will still shrink from abusing the name of Jesus. In our Sunday services and worship there is an outward deference to the name of Christ. It is reputable to believe or profess to believe in him. There are some men who go farther, and are zealous for the fact. They imagine there is nothing evangelical in a discourse that does not mention the name of Christ—that it lacks the savor of Christianity. But how much of the spirit of Christ is in the heart and life of society ? How many, worshiping even in our churches consecrated to his name, have made their own hearts and souls to be the indwelling temples of Christ ?

Hence the inconsistency of the world. Honest people point to Christian communities, and say, "See how Christians act! See what kind of elements mingle with their best civilization! See their ships laden for heathen lands with Bibles and tracts, and the tools and engines of war! See them speak sentiments of love and mercy, and carry victory with the sword!" In so far as this is a diabolical element, in so far the spirit of Christ is not in them. It is one thing to have Christ in society, and it is another to have a conventional or traditional Christ. But it is necessary that Christ should dwell in the heart, and work by the power of his spirit in the souls of men. It is not enough to believe in a Christ that has come into the world historically; in a Christ that was born nineteen hundred years ago; in a Christ unto whom was given gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is not enough to have his name sung in anthems and repeated in tender words, to characterize the Advent of Christ into the souls of men.

The faith in Christ, embracing all this, is an earnest, original action of each soul for itself. There is more truth glowing in that soul which pauses on the threshold of gospel history, and feels staggered by statements here and there, and even pauses at the matchless form of Christ before accepting it—there is more reverence for the truth in this case than in a *mere outward* conformity, and a reputable belief in Christ confessed with the lips. True faith is an earnest, original action of the individual soul, moved by strong conviction. That faith is good for nothing which you take and adopt from another. You cannot receive a faith from

your fathers. There is a time when we can indicate to our children the land-marks of right. But even the minds of children should not be cast into a fixed mold. We should not say, "Search no more; here is the image of our fathers, and the image and superscription must be stamped upon the waxen substance of your minds; let it harden there!" We say, there is the old Bible; let your minds become developed, and your own experience will shed light upon it. So learn for yourselves an original, active, earnest faith that comes out of every man's soul, which he struggles and wrestles for as Jacob wrestled in the night with the angel. We should feel as the Samaritans did: "Now we believe not because of thy saying; for we . . . ourselves . . . *know* that this is the Christ." But they themselves saw Him and knew Him, and from an earnest and original conviction of their own souls they believed in Him.

Conviction is a personal exercise of trust. It is a spontaneous, complete yielding of the whole soul to that in which we trust. We have instances in the New Testament, where the father, whose boy had so often cast himself into the fire or water, of whom it might be said he was possessed of a demon, Christ said, "Be healed!" He did not know that he could believe in that Divine Helper. But he believed that if there was any hope or help for his son it must be a divine assistance. And he said, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Oh! what a cry! How much nobler than that saying, "I believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three in one and one in three!" How much more of vitality! So

the poor penitent woman at Simon's table, weeping on our Saviour's feet, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. She believed, poor wreck of humanity, an outcast visited with the sharp scorn of man—she believed that there was help in the divine love and purity of Christ. She threw herself there, and that faith saved her. And the poor blind man, though pushed aside by the crowd, who said, "Hold thy peace," still felt that Christ could save him, and knew it was his best chance ; that there was something there that could heal him. It was not a confession of the lips—not an outward acquiescence that comes through traditional channels, but that comes in an earnest conviction of need and of help. True, it was an intellectual conviction. We cannot believe blindly and by hazard, and therefore the intellect has to operate. To believe with the heart is required of us especially. It is a very grave mistake to separate the elements of human nature, as men often do.

We sometimes speak as though the intellect acted independently of the heart, or the heart acted independently of the intellect. Head and heart go together in an earnest faith. The heart sustains the head. If we do not like a thing, it is very hard to believe it. Faith requires the conviction of the intellect and the belief of the heart. That is the conviction laid down here—a conviction of our need of Jesus. What is ordinarily called faith is nothing more than a decent deference or acquiescence, and is not the faith required of us.

There is a great difference between sentiment and

conviction. Sentiment is a momentary feeling, a flush of the soul, a thrill of the nerves. You will see sometimes the most depraved people, under the influence of preaching or any sudden event, melted down, and you would think them the best of people. The next moment the sentiment has passed away, and they become as reckless and evil as ever. There is a great difference between the patriotism of the Fourth of July—a patriotism often of bombast and sentiment—and that patriotism in the dark and critical hour, which takes “the forlorn hope,” and pours out the life blood. The one is a sentiment; the other is a conviction. There is a sentiment of benevolence which is exhibited in the Apostle James, when he says, “Be ye warmed and filled.” So in this inclement season of the year, when so many poor are around us, should we say, “Be ye warmed and filled.” But it is not a sentiment which puts forth the helping hand, and touches the issues of humanity, and lifts humanity up. One is a sentiment, the other is a conviction—a conviction which always goes out to practical action. The Christ that really goes into our hearts is a conviction. When we feel that we have need of Christ, that without him we are weak, misguided, forlorn, moved by our own evil passions—when we have a conviction that only He can help us—then the door is thrown open, then the King of Glory comes in! “Behold!” says Christ, “I stand at the door and knock.” How often he stands at the door and knocks! He has been knocking for eighteen hundred years at the door of this great world. He has been knocking at our hearts so long that we have recognized

him from the outside. How often have we opened the outside, and said, "Take possession here."

Christ himself is the great point of belief. But what is the bond of Christian union? There may be, indeed, a true Catholic Church—a Roman Catholic Church, or Anglican Church, or this or that sect. Where is the true bond of union? The bond of union now is where the bond of union was eighteen hundred years ago among the disciples in Jerusalem. It is where the bond of union was on the mount of Calvary, in the vale of Gethsemane. The moment men undertake to enter into definitions of Jesus, and make them the standards and tests of Christianity,—the moment they say, "You must believe this or that *about* Christ, that he is one with the Father, or is secondary; that the atonement is wrought out by God, and that by His atonement men are cleansed—the moment you pile up doctrine on doctrine, or assert the Calvinistic or Athanasian creed,—you split the Church into sects, and men become as opposite in their opinions as the poles. The moment you set up Christ as the divine image of the Father, and believe in that love and holiness, and let the spirit of that purity control your conduct, that moment you have a bond which can unite every man. Away below our opposing controversies, our warring creeds, flows the deep current of a living Personal Christ. And belief *in* him, not *about* him, is the only way in which "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Then the true Advent comes.

II. THE MANNER OF THE ADVENT.

We may consider here the *manner* of the Advent. Let us have nothing here that savors of mysticism or unreality. A great deal of Christian teaching fails of its effect because it is unreal. Words are used to which people can attach no meaning; terms are employed that often escape our apprehension. What is meant when we say that Christ dwells in the hearts of men? We do not mean that an actual Christ dwells there; we mean that the spirit of Christ dwells in the hearts of men. And the spirit is really the man. The man is not in his outward or physical form. The real man is the soul, the spirit, and character. The moral standard of Christianity is not a verbal rule, but a character. The rule of Christian life is not an outward law; it is a character. When our characters are assimilated to Christ's character, or when Christ's character permeates and controls us, then Christ dwells in our hearts. There is no mysticism in that—nothing unreal, or anything we cannot grasp. Christ dwells in the heart as a character—as a spirit of life. Therefore Christ is not a mere abstract dogma. He is not to be looked upon from without, whose history is recorded by the evangelists, or concerning whose nature we have studied, and come to certain conclusions. Christ is to be viewed as an inward reality—not a mere abstract dogma, or external law, but an abiding and indwelling spirit.

Here is the peculiarity of the Gospel. You cannot enact any outward or external law that will be a law for

all times and conditions. If you should multiply your laws until they covered the whole earth, they would never meet all conditions of humanity. Not even the Mosaic law was fitted for all time. When we read the old Jewish law, and consider its adaptation to the time and place, then indeed it seems to be worthy of the divine Lawgiver; then we see its fitness when the Israelites passed from Egypt across the Red Sea, and entered upon a long pilgrimage in the desert, seeking for the Land of Promise, and becoming settled gradually into a nation. They were a lesson to the world. But when Christ came, the ceremonial law was abolished. The very thing which lifted up the Jewish people was declared by the disciples to be a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." How often human legislation find its labor balked by some who, guiding themselves only by the letter, find a loophole in the law through which they crawl. Then the act is amended, and "an amendment to an amendment" is added, until it is thought that they cover all forms of human action. These laws are necessary, yet we never could have perfect society or harmony of action by laws temporal and local in their nature. Therefore, Christianity comes and gives us not a law but a spirit—the spirit of Christ Jesus. The law which controls us is not a law cut in tables of stone, or an enactment in a law book, but Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. See how wonderfully this is fitted for all time. It is fitting for all occasions.

How foolish is the mere outward imitation of Christ! You may remember St. Francis, who, wishing to ap-

proach Christ in all things, was wounded in the side, thus thinking he could assimilate to Christ. Can a man assimilate to Christ because he goes from town to town preaching in a flowing robe, wearing sandals and bearing a cross? Can we imitate Christ by placing ourselves in the same circumstances? We cannot get in the same circumstances. The world changes. Ages pass by, and other conditions arise. What would become of society if we should imitate Christ outwardly? Does not society have a divine origin, too? Do not you think that these agencies of the world have a divine sanction? Do you think that it is the requirement of the day to tear all this curious web asunder, and every man to go about preaching the Gospel, leaving father and mother, and selling all he has, and giving it to the poor? It is by the *spirit*, and not the outward form that Christ dwells in us. One man may to-day show the spirit of Christ in the disposition of his wealth; another man may do likewise in his poverty. The man who uses his wealth in a humble, lowly spirit—with the spirit of the loving Jesus; who makes it not merely the instrument of selfish aggrandizement and outward development—he feels that wealth is the gift of God. The outward condition does not make a man like Christ; but the inward spirit. Thus Christianity is adapted to all conditions.

How strange it is, that among all the faces we see passing through the great city, and in the multitudinous crowd, that no two of them are alike. Whatever strange land we may visit, we find all faces are different—all diverse as the leaves of the forest. So it

is with human action and condition. They are diverse. Yet there is one nature—one human soul in man. The deepest cry of anguish, the deepest wounds of humanity are the same all over the world, and in all time. The spirit of love is fitted for all conditions. Be you rich or poor—do you stand in a prominent or obscure and lowly place before men—have the spirit of Christ ! Let it dwell in your heart ! Be truly Christ-like in your home and business relations, fulfilling the duties that rest upon you, as did those who went about Palestine of old preaching the Gospel to the poor. *If you are poor and humble and obscure, do not fall into the error of believing you can do no good ; that you are too lowly and little to accomplish any benefit in the world. Does God take note of the actual size and description of your goodness ? Who can tell what shall be God's minister—the little bird in the air, the snow in the field, the lilies that are dressed better than Solomon ! All are agents of God's instruction. Use your instruments to minister good to man, to make the best use of the little you have. Drop the pebble in the water, and who can tell how wide its ripples will extend in the stream ? Do your little acts of goodness and live a true life, and God will see to the rest, and make, perhaps, your small practical action to result higher and deeper than you can calculate.

The spirit of a life is the thing, after all—the tone and the temper—not its outward conformity of limitation. Therefore we say that Christianity is adapted to all times and conditions. It did not give us a law that you shall do this or that. When the Christian

Church got into that perplexity of undertaking to hamper people with forms and ceremonies, that every day and every hour it fell aside from the true teaching of Christ. It fell into the condition that Paul denounced in the Epistle to the Galatians. If we possess the spirit of Christ we shall feel that He is near to us, and shall not be looking to a far distant sphere for heaven, and discover hell in some outward punishment. We shall not look for Christ in the vista of nineteen hundred years, but shall know

“That to be saved is only this,
 Salvation from our selfishness,
 From more than elemental fire,
 The soul’s unsatisfied desire;
 From sin itself, and not the pain
 That warns us of its chafing chain.

* * * * *

That the dear Christ dwells not afar,
 The King of some remoter star,
 Listening at times with flattered ear
 To homage wrung from selfish fear,
 But here, amidst the poor and blind,
 The bound and suffering of our kind,
 In works we do, in prayers we pray,
 Life of our lives, He lives to-day.”

III. SPHERE AND RESULT OF THE ADVENT.

We are brought to consider the *sphere and result* of the Advent. Christ’s Advent is in and through individual souls. To be sure we contemplate Christianity as the grandest scheme of social regeneration, and the

only true scheme that the world has ever known. It came and unbarred partitions that divided man from man. The Roman and the polished Greek regarded the rest of the world, like the Chinese of our day, as barbarians, and none were free except Roman citizens. But when Christ came, he proclaimed that all men were heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and he sent forth his disciples, bidding them to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every nation. When we consider the isolation and exclusiveness of teachers of other systems of religion, and the comprehensiveness of Christianity, it offers a theme that we cannot exhaust. It aimed at a new and better social state; it aims at it now. And men have looked forward to a New Jerusalem, and that Christ would come with a shout and gather together his elect.

In the tenth century there was a wide and prevalent conviction that Christ was coming upon earth in a material form, and there are men who are looking to a future day, when all the world shall be made beautiful with divine love; when every harmful and hurtful thing shall be removed; when there shall be no more war, sorrow, sin, or selfishness. The idea of a better social state cannot be over-estimated. But all this improvement taking place through the influence of Christianity, is to take place through individual souls; this action upon things is primarily through individuals. Christianity speaks to individuals. It did not call upon communities at first. It did not call nations, but individuals,—Peter, James, and John and Nathaniel, and in due time Paul. If there was to be any practical effort;

breaks out in revolution. Sometimes it lights the fire of inspiration in individual hearts, and becomes divine. But its primary operation is in this silent, hidden way. No other instrumentality is going to effect this work. There are agencies, such as the printing-press. But how? Only as it is the instrument of righteousness and individual conviction. It may become the instrument of evil. So all these agencies that are boasted as the missionaries of civilization, it is only as they throw divine light abroad that they may be regarded as good agencies. So with the discovery of America; the veil was lifted up, and the far-seeing Genoese beheld the result of his dreams. And in due time men came who stamped everything with their Puritanism, who worked in selfishness of heart. They did it heroically, and God be thanked! They were loyal to the conviction of the individual soul. You may laugh at and scorn the Puritans, but they were strong in their loyalty to truth. The cavalier's spears went down before the ironsides of Puritanism. While they might be more tolerant, perhaps, yet they were instruments of God, and worked out his purpose, however narrow and stern might have been the channel.

So society is benefited by individual life and conviction. Do not talk nonsense about general corruption and corruption in society, if there is individual corruption and wrong in your heart and mind. But, still again, social results are valuable as they affect individuals. You and I value things as they affect us in our highest and deepest welfare. Society! What is it for? For the elevation of the individual. What are all these

influences ? They come to you and me as solitary souls, that we are not to lock ourselves up, but to labor for others. We are not to look for our mere aggrandizement ; but the result is in the individual soul.

And how priceless is the individual soul ! How it is set forth in the New Testament, as for instance the poor lost sheep, worth for the time being in the eyes of the shepherd more than all the flock ; the little piece of silver sought for in intense earnestness for its individuality. So God and Christ seek for your and my soul. When Christ comes into your heart with personal and individual salvation, that is the true Advent. Whatever else may take place, we ourselves must realize Christ for ourselves. We stand not simply alone in the universe ; we are linked by many ties ; we are bound by many dear cords. But you and I are, after all, solitary souls, having our own griefs, troubles, needs, and experiences. We must be alone in a great many things, and nobody can help us. We must be alone in our trouble and trial. We must be alone in our conviction. Our brethren will not go with us. We must follow the truth, let what will come. Men will scorn and repudiate us. There is nothing to do but follow our individual convictions. So we must stand alone. We must die ! No other hands, however dear, can hold us back when the dark river rolls before us. We must go alone, casting off all the garb of earthly reality.

How solitary is man ! We want something that can minister to our deepest wants. And there is One who can do it and dwell in our hearts. Time passes, years go by, and seasons show the progress of age and decay.

We want something to abide with us. Then, indeed, can we realize the true Advent deeper and more really than when Christ came to the material world ; then indeed is the Advent “that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.”

CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,—Matt. xviii, 4.

THE question which our Saviour, with a beautiful symbolism, and with a profound truth, answers in the passage before us, had been a subject of dispute between his disciples—the question as to who should be greatest. The very propounding of such a question was in itself evidence of misconception as to the nature and conditions of the divine and spiritual estate; the bare idea of being the greatest, merely for the sake of being greatest, indicated a level of thought and feeling far below its lofty requirements. It brings those primitive disciples very distinctly before us, however; it makes them very real to us, as men like unto ourselves, to discern the gradual processes of divine truth in their minds struggling with the prejudices and limitations of our humanity; to see the vision of heavenly things slowly breaking through the darkness, leaving for a long while the shreds and fragments of grosser conceits drifting athwart its spiritual light.

If by inspiration we mean freedom from all miscon-

ceptions and all error, and a lifting up into the realm of perfect knowledge, evidently we do not derive any such idea from the account which the disciples give of themselves. They claim nowhere any such inspiration. Nothing can be more artless, and therefore more evidently truthful, than their representation in these gospels of their own thoughts and conduct; and they do not shrink from telling us that, at one period, they did entertain these narrow and unworthy ideas of Christ's kingdom. They looked upon it as a condition of material profit and splendor, and as an arena where the selfish ambition and miserable rivalries of earthly empires had scope for action. How beautifully does Jesus rebuke and refute all this! Calling a little child, he sets it in the midst of them—according to Mark's Gospel, he takes the child in his arms—as though he would teach them the glory of dependence, of the utmost confidence and affection; and then he gives them the lesson contained in the passage before us: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." What a profound, what an original idea of greatness, does this unfold! How it rebukes the world's conceit of greatness, even at the present hour! how it lowers its standards and reduces its estimates! how it condemns the aims and motives with which men plunge into the arena of effort—with which they construct policies and study attitudes, and painfully build up structures, and sweep the earth with the fiery mist and the bloody

foam of ambition! Yes, an original and beautiful idea of greatness, indeed, was this which fell from the lowly Redeemer's lips; this which was most perfectly illustrated in his own life.

But while we thus accept its truth, let us proceed to examine some of its constituents as presented in the passage under consideration. The first thing that calls for our attention is the *commendation of humility*. You will observe, however, that humility is not set forth here as the sole condition of the heavenly estate. It is a condition—an indispensable condition; but there is nothing in the Saviour's words limiting the entire range of Christian character to this one quality. We are to humble ourselves as little children; we are to come to that spirit and condition which childhood symbolizes; but having humbled ourselves into that condition, there is more than one quality of true heavenly greatness. And yet, my hearers, if we take this genuine spiritual greatness as the end of our being, how true it is that, in one phase or another, humility—and we may say humility alone—does lie at its base, and is its secret fountain. That we may arrive at the conviction of this truth, let us for a few moments consider what humility is not.

In the first place, humility is not a weak and timid quality. It must be carefully distinguished from a groveling spirit. There is such a thing as an honest pride and self-respect. We should think something of our humanity, and not cast it under men's feet.

Though we may be servants of all, we should be servile to none. There is a divine instinct within us, to guard our self-respect and cause us to hold to our manhood and not surrender it for any consideration. It is a divine instinct with which a man falls back upon this in peace, it may be in Christian forgiveness, but yet in firmness, when he is insulted. It is a divine instinct when a man gets tired of being a chattel, and cuts his moorings and scuds away towards the north star; it is a divine instinct in nations that surges under solid thrones and heaves them in the cycles of history, like the billows of an earthquake, and sometimes even extinguishes empires in blood. We should separate the idea of humility from anything like servility. For it is terrible when men or associations are gagged in free speech and conscience—when they dare not say they have souls of their own—when they limit and hedge in the truth. That is not humility; it is criminal baseness and dastardly meanness. Men enthralled by such a timid spirit have no independence; such men are grossly unjust to themselves. They do nothing; they become nothing. It is unnecessary, therefore, to say that this is not humility.

Nor, let me say again, should we confound humility with that morbid self-abasement which grows out of certain religious views; it is unfavorable to sound ideas of moral responsibility in ourselves as well as to vigorous action. Besides, it is often the cloak of a canting hypocrisy; often men are never more proud

than when professing their utter worthlessness; and they are the very people who would become most angry if you should take them at what they say they are worth. Now they lose sight, whether knowingly or unknowingly, of the real conditions of humility. We are sinners, all of us, and that is the real ground of humility; but how do we feel that we are sinners? Do we feel that we are unworthy because we are totally depraved?—because there is no good in us? I don't know why a man should feel bad about that. He can't help himself any more than an insect can imprisoned in a stone. He is shut up in fatalism, in a dark and stony necessity. He says, "I have no good thing in me; nothing was given to me; I am not responsible, and can not be made responsible, for what my ancestors did. I have no good thing in me; why should I be humble about it? why care about it and mourn over it? But if there is something good in me—if there are powers for something better—if there are suggestions of something higher—if, in all my sin and imperfection, there is a sacred possibility in me, well may I be humble because I have abused that possibility and perverted those powers. And when I see the goodness against which I have sinned, the infinite heavenly Love to which I have done despite, well may I become humbled." This feeling is very different from that kind of morbid religiousness which merely stands up and emphasizes its imperfection and unworthiness; which thinks the height of evangelical hu-

mility is to call all we do "filthy rags," and make low, groveling confessions of sin before God. That is not the kind of humility we want. Feel what you can be and what you ought to be; feel what God has done for you, and that will give you a healthy humility, which will bow you down before God, and also inspire you with a sacred repentance.

Nor, again, is genuine humility incompatible with a consciousness of merit; for a secret persuasion of power is the spring of noble enterprise. The consciousness of possessing something is essential to the sense of deficiency which makes us truly humble. Hence the Apostle's injunction, "Let no man think of himself more highly than he ought to think," implies that there is a certain lawful limit of self-esteem. In short, humility really contrasts with no great and good thing; only with a folly which is as transient as it is giddy; with a pride which forgets the Almighty; and with that liquid self-satisfaction which, in a universe of unlimited progress and possibility, affronts both God and man.

And now, my friends, I ask you to consider how humility does really lie at the base and constitute the fountain and central spring of all genuine greatness. I need not tell you that we instinctively associate humility with true greatness; with real excellence in any man. You always suspect—men at large always suspect—the genuineness of anything that comes with pomp and flourish; you doubt the truth of a man who

has many words to prove to you that he tells the truth; you doubt the greatness of any man who comes with sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Ostentation is the signal-flag of hypocrisy. The charlatan is verbose and assumptive; the Pharisee is ostentatious, because he is a hypocrite. Pride is the master-sin of the devil; and the devil is the father of lies. I have already defined the limits of honest pride, and now I am free to say, therefore, that that pride which is opposed to genuine humility is apt to be the pompous mask, the miserable alternative of essential weakness. Take a man who comes before us with a strutting pomposity and general boastfulness, and you infer that he is a weak man. He tries to make himself appear richer or greater, or more highly endowed with talent, than he really is. He chafes at the limitations of nature's charter, and so issues false stock, and swells into a great glazed Chinese balloon of pretension; or, if he does not endeavor to conceal his inherent weakness by this kind of puffed-out drapery, then he endeavors to borrow something from his ancestors, and thus to get a little higher by standing upon their dead renown, which perhaps itself is a lump of pretension, like his own. He swells out with pride of family, as though that made him any better; as though a card with a crest on it would give him the *entree* of heaven and make its vigilant sentinels obsequious; whereas, we must strip off all heraldries and walk in lowly democratic equality with Paul the tent-maker and Peter the fisherman.

I need not touch on the weaknesses which pride covers, but does not obviate, in the matter of dress and show. This is too boyish and girlish a conception of something great to be seriously dwelt upon—the swelling pride of flounced and coquettish beauty, and strutting, perfumed dandyism. Only what a vast area it covers by making such a mock gilt pasteboard affair of society—such a miserable attempt to hide the envyings, the rivalries, the meannesses, the splendid miseries, the racks and thumb-screws that belong to the inquisition of fashion, and a thousand shabby things; the shabbiest of all being the people who are ashamed to appear just what they are. To come back to the positive point: Here is one element of greatness in humility; it is a great thing for a man to feel and know that he is a man; it is a great thing for him to simply understand where he is and profess what he is. There is a charm about that, when a man who knows he is not a great man, doing no great things; simply stands up under the conviction of it, and does what he can. A man will feel, then, that his sphere is divinely appointed. The moment a man finds a limit to his powers, and confesses it; the moment he sees the place to which he is fitted, and fills it up, there is nothing that stands between him and the conception that he fills a divinely-appointed sphere. He may think it is a small sphere, and so it is, in comparison with some things. If you look at the universe around, you may be filling a very small sphere of labor. But when you

take these high standards, who does not fill a small sphere of labor? "Why," says Carlyle, in speaking of the death of Louis XV., "that little brick-field, oh, man! is as wide from the fixed stars as that kingdom of France, where he did, well or ill." When you take the loftiest standards in comparison, who is filling a great sphere in God's universe? What king, what president, what statesman, what man of pride and renown, is filling a great sphere? But the moment you come down and take the ordinary earthly standards, the true test of any man's condition is the uses to which he puts it—and to which the Almighty himself puts it. The uses of a thing make it great, not its extent. The uses of the wayside spring, that refreshes the traveler's march; or the flower that grows at the foot of awful ice-peaks and battlemented crags, unfolding all the summer long its beautiful parable of Providence and love—who can limit the usefulness of that? and who can say that it is nothing, because its sphere is little?

I have looked around me upon this past anniversary week, and I have thought how many men who have uttered no word, who have come into no prominence before the public—humble men, whose sphere of labor may be in some secluded part of the land, who, perhaps, as a great treat, have come up to this anniversary—how many of them are really, after all, doing a work more acceptable to God, and more truly building up his kingdom, than many who have stood before us

with pompous eloquence, and fill a wide sphere of observation! Let a man know, I repeat, that he is small and weak, but work up to the limits of his power, up to the limits of his divinely-appointed sphere; he has no business to limit its greatness; it is a sphere of use, and God will overrule it to his own ends. So there is real greatness when a man is just strong enough to hold to simple humanity, and make the best of it; to hold the powers that he has, and make the most of them. On the other hand, if a man is, in some comparative sense, great—I say if he is, in some comparative sense, great—how we at once acknowledge the evidence of that greatness in modest expression! How it sets off a man's greatness! What a beautiful setting to the diamond of his talent and genius is a modest expression! There is no influence in pompous greatness, after all—even if it is greatness; but it shines in its own quiet luster in modest revelations. And if thus we see also in humility the conditions of accumulated or acquired greatness, we know that only an humble man really acquires knowledge. No great intellectual thing is possible except to those who lie low in humility. The greatest men of our time are men who are, intellectually speaking, the humblest; and why? Because they can understand the greatness of the work they have undertaken, in finding out the immensities of God all around them. The more men commune with nature and with the truth in any department, the more do they experience the oppressive

sense of a mystery—a mystery that excites and baffles—an inscrutableness that looks out from the star and the flower; an indefinite shadow that always lingers upon the horizon; an enigma that eludes us in every analysis; the vital secret that flows from us, and that circulates through us, and that we can not examine or detain.

The humbler men are, the greater they are. What are the proudest triumphs of our day, intellectually speaking? They are in little things. The great men of our day do not construct cosmologies; do not sit down and build up great theories of the universe. We laugh at such things; we suspect their soundness at once. When a man comes to us and tells us that he has a new theory of creation, we begin to think whether he had not better have a theory of his own sanity. The things which occupy the greatest minds of our day are the little sparks of electricity, the little wayside shells, the blossoms, the infusoriæ myriad-fold that hang in a single drop of water. Down in the little lowly things men find the great secret of the world; away down they begin to find the springs and sources of things, and the profoundest books of science are founded on these little ordinary, unobserved affairs. Humility is the spring of all intellectual greatness.

And so is it especially in religious things. I need not say that the man who is convinced that he is perfect, is of all men the farthest from being perfect. Farther than the sinner; farther than the man who knows that he is a sinner, and who feels his deep guilt

before God, is the man who feels virtually that "I am perfect;" the Pharisee, who says, "Oh, God, I thank thee that I am not like other men." No, no; the man stands nearest to God who says, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" There is the spring of all real acquisition in religious things. When a man sets up the standard of Christ Jesus, then he begins to feel humble; then he begins to aspire. These are the conditions; these are the springs of all religious gain. And so should we especially be humble in the conceit of religious opinions; not that we should be wavering; not that we should be doubtful where our conviction shines clear—that is not the point; but we should be humble. We know that we have not all truth; we should feel that there is much more to be gained.

Now I find no fault with a man for being orthodox. But I find great fault when he has a conceit of orthodoxy; when he thinks he knows it all, and that anybody else standing upon the other side of the religious world is necessarily mistaken, and, therefore, out of the way. I do not care at all if a man calls me an infidel or a heretic. But when he joins to the conception of my being an infidel or a heretic the conception that I am an immoral or dishonest man, because I do not believe as he does, then I repel that as an assertion of pride. What right has he, a man finite like myself, anointed with no authority above his fellows; like myself, feeling for the truth, I trust; what right has he to tear from me my claims to Christian honesty,

my claims to Christian conviction, or to break into the sanctities of my soul and say that I have no relations with Jesus Christ? That conceit of orthodoxy I despise and repel. His orthodoxy he is perfectly welcome to, if he holds it sincerely. But I say that is a harsh, canting, Jesuitical spirit which presumes that a man who differs from it, being mistaken, is therefore bad; it is as opposite to the spirit of Jesus Christ as was the Pharisee who accused, or the Roman who crucified him.

No, my friends; there is no religious gain of Christ's spirit, or growth of Christian graces, except by a humility like that of a little child. Not, perhaps, an unconscious humility, but humility for all greatness, intellectual or moral, for all gain, for all true glory. Oh, man, humble thyself as a little child, and you have reached the first, the indispensable condition!

But there is another point in the passage before us which I ask you to consider. I said just now that the child's humility was an unconscious humility, and this indicates the distinction that we are to make in the analogy here. It was one point that Christ was illustrating; not everything. He did not mean to say that we were to become like little children in every respect, that we were to empty ourselves of all knowledge, that we should erase all the lines of experience and subdue all the manly strength we have gained in the discipline of years. The single point which he was illustrating, was the humble disposition in which we were to be like little children. But this humility is

different from a little child's; it is a conscious humility in one sense—not a proud humility, for that would be a contradiction in terms. A conscious humility is different from the child's; our spiritual gain is different from the child's condition. There is this difference between the two cases: in the one, we arrive at the child-like condition by personal experiences; on the other hand, the child stands simply in the condition of unconscious innocence. And yet when we come into this condition of humbleness, we know how to use our knowledge, our experience—all that we have gained in the toil and discipline of years. No—we never can be children any more; and some may think that is a sad fact. It is so, in one phase, to see children coming up and taking life so freely and freshly, unconscious of the cares that will come with years, unconscious of the sorrow that will fall like palls upon their hopes, unconscious of the sin and trial through which they must pass. How it makes us sometimes sigh to be back among them, when we stand upon the mountain slopes, amid the darkness and storm, and look through the vail to the distant sunny landscape and the pleasant flowery fields! We look back thus at childhood taking life as a full cup brimming with unalloyed happiness. But we have—and let us thank God that we have—something better than childhood's innocence, if we have lived truly and Christ-like. We have strength to overcome evil which the child must learn; we have a power to trample sin underneath us that the child

must undergo much to gain; we have not the innocence of Eden, but by God's help and Christ's example we may have the victory of Gethsemane. It is a great thing to have the humbleness of a child. But it is to be joined with the consciousness and the effort of the man.

But I ask you once more to consider the prominence and distinction which Christianity, in the passage before us, lends to childhood. I want to say something upon another occasion, and I mean to, on the life of childhood, more at large. But now I merely notice this as a peculiarity of Christianity, and as one phase of its universal humanity, that it brings into such prominence and distinction the little child. The Church, or a portion of it, is the child's Church; the child has its place in Christianity beautifully asserted by Christ himself, when he lay in the manger, and when he was a child. All the sources of our humanity are represented in him, and all are wrought out in him.

Oh, my friends, you never can exhaust that great truth that is unfolded in Jesus, the illustration of our humanity that he began at childhood, and showed the sacredness of childhood as well as of manhood, and has given it prominence and distinction. And is not this an illustration, a carrying out of what we see God has done in natural provisions in regard to children? What cares, what offices, what tender love he sets around them! He sheathes them in weak flesh, but throws around them the more than adamant armor

of a mother's love. He makes them unconscious of life's sin, but he also makes them happy in that ignorance, and they live for a time merely to grow, to develop, and to unfold in the light until they shall be strengthened for the world's conflict. Oh! I thank God most especially for the care with which he has surrounded children. In the beautiful language of Richter, "The smallest are nearest God as the smallest planets are nearest the sun."

I think we may say, that even in God there is something of that peculiar love for children that is in our nature—and what is there wrong in thinking this? and so we may think when he gathers them from us prematurely, and takes them up to himself; surely it is with a peculiar tenderness that those flowers are transplanted which shall bloom no more on earth. At least this we may know, that no father's love, no mother's affection for a child, is greater than God's love for it. And if, in a moment of darkness, of a succession of sad crushing calamities, we are disposed to doubt God's love—if we are disposed to murmur at his dispensations, interpret him by yourself, O father! O mother!—interpret his love by your love, and remember that you, the stream, can not care more for that child than he, the fountain and ocean of all love. That is shown in the nature of things, but more especially through Jesus Christ.

But, moreover, there is testimony in Christianity, not only for the love of God to the child, but to the

spiritual worth of the child. The child illustrates the value of the soul as Christ brings it before us here. Now, observe, there is no materialistic theory that would be consistent with the way in which Christ treats the child, because, on the materialistic theory, everything grows upward, grows wider and better. But the doctrine of the text is not the doctrine of *development*; we must *go back* to childhood again; we don't develop humility. We may develop physical strength; we may develop intellectual splendor; we may develop imagination or reason, but we do not develop humility. In that the child has the advantage of us. If it were merely material, why should not the child have less humility than the man? No; we come back to the child's condition, in some respects; and that illustrates the child's share of our common spiritual nature. And here is the reason why we find the element of greatness set forth as it is by Jesus Christ. Greatness is in spiritual power; it is not an outward attainment that the man can attain and the child can not. It is not any outside clothing; it is not in crowns; it is not in the world's fame; it is a spiritual quality, and the child has that spiritual quality which is the condition of all greatness. We come back to that when we get at the basis of greatness. I say this shows us the spiritual worth of a child, the spiritual element in it; and it indicates our duty and obligation to the child; above all things, to take care of that precious jewel that God has set in

this little earthly casket; above all things, to see that spiritual element duly cultured, that its germs of heavenly life shall be brought forth to the utmost possible perfection.

There is the claim of the Sabbath school; there is the claim of every institution that brings Christ's truth to bear upon the young mind and the young heart; and if this morning, as there will be, there is made an appeal to you to contribute to the Sabbath school connected with this congregation, think, after all, that even the donation of charity you may bestow upon the starving, upon those who need material things, may be called for by a want more imminent than the welfare of your children, yet it is not more precious than the gift you may bestow for their spiritual welfare. It is better than building churches up-town or down-town; it is building a church in the future; it is building a church of spiritual and everlasting material.

But what a beautiful thought is the spiritual life of a child as Christ develops it, when he sets this little one forth and says: Humble yourself like that! And how it incites us to nurture the spiritual nature of our children—the foundation of our churches, the foundation of society, the foundation of our institutions, the foundation of all social as well as of all individual greatness!

Finally, my hearers, I ask you to notice this one thing more in the text. It indicates not only the child-like disposition, but the child-like relation in all

who in any degree enter into the sphere of Christian faith and feeling. Humble yourself as a little child! I ask you, is it not to the child's condition that God would bring us all? not to its weakness or ignorance, but to the child's humble, confiding, trusting disposition, to all that is really beautiful and worthy of love in childhood? It was not merely a type of humility that that child was held forth; it was a type of that reliance and filial dependence into which God would bring all men. And as Jesus took it into his arms with confidence, it does seem to me that it illustrates the way in which our heavenly Father would take us all into his arms. O that the full sense of the yearning solicitude of Almighty God could be brought home to our hearts!

Oh, man, chafing with pride, tremulous with passion, too haughty to repent, too ignorant of your real welfare to stoop for a moment and bow down in penitent prayer; oh, man, running a wild career of passion and shame and wrong, would that thou wouldst consent to be a little child, come back in lowly penitence, and lie in the arms of the Almighty! Oh, in this trust, in this confidence, are the springs of our true relations with God, the relations that he is endeavoring to establish!

There is no humility without that love and confidence. Humility! Is the subjection which I give to the tyrant, humility? No; only the reverence which I give to a father. There is no peace, there is no comfort, without confidence in God's love; there is no re-

ligion without it. There is say-so religion; there is a lip-service; there is a cant, a pretense; there are heavy burdens; but there is no spontaneous, radical religion. After all, we know that the holiest saint that prays to God must be like the humble infant in the mother's arms; we must all come into the child-like condition.

I would not dare to preach, I could not preach if I did not have confidence in the Love that is watching over us, if I thought I was the minister of some awful power, some terrible mystery. If I thought that I must carry to dying beds and to scenes of mortal need only the great dark shadow of a mystery, I could not preach here. It is because I think I have to speak of infinite love, of love greater than we can fathom, broader than we can compass, more full than we can express; because I feel that there is a power back of the humble words which I speak, to flow into the hearts of men and lift them up. Nor can you receive religion, or be religious, only as you come with the full confidence of love to God the Father.

Oh, it is a great thing to be children even when we are old, to be children when our hair is gray, to be children when our faces are wrinkled, to be children when our hearts are scarred with the troubles and mysteries of the world; it is a great thing to come in penitence, in trust, in confidence to God. That is the essence of all real humility; that is great indeed, the greatness of the kingdom of heaven.

HONORING CHRIST.

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna; Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.—John xii, 12, 13.

AS I take up the account of this enthusiastic homage rendered to the meek and lowly Redeemer, my mind reverts to another scene famous in ancient history, a scene in which there was also a great multitude, more numerous, perhaps, than was ever collected for any other purpose in any period of time. I allude to that immense host which accompanied Xerxes in his attempted conquest of Greece; a concourse gathered together from the Indies to the Lybian desert; a sea of nations rolling on in serried waves, with turbans and helmets of brass and steel, of silver and gold. Seven days and seven nights were they without intermission, and under the stimulus of the lash, in crossing the boat bridges of the Hellespont; and as those thronged ranks took up their line of march, they all moved on with exultation, and strewed branches in the path-way of their king. But what a contrast in spirit, in purpose, and in result, between that occasion of murmur-

ing excitement and strewing branches, and this truly royal procession that poured down the Mount of Olives! There, a vast army, held together by the bands of military force, and moving in abject submission; here, a spontaneous multitude, kindling with the impulses of wonder and of love. That, marching to the work of terror and of desolation; this, celebrating the achievements of a healing and restoring goodness. In the midst of that concourse sits an ambitious despot, with subject nations flocking around his chariot wheels, the most gorgeous type of earthly power and glory. Here, among a rejoicing people, with eyes that had been blind, turned toward him in beaming gratitude; with tongues that had been dumb, crying hosannas to his name; with hands that once were impotent, strewing branches and garments in his path, comes the King of Israel, the Saviour of mankind, in humble raiment and wayworn sandals, riding upon an ass. Move on, magnificent monarch, flashing in haughty confidence; move on in transient pomp to miserable defeat; and move on, oh, lowly Redeemer, descending into the deep shades of humiliation and death, to march in divine might to a world-wide victory.

My friends, I have not quoted this ancient incident for the sake of the mere historical contrast, but in order that I may bring into more vivid relief the transactions recorded in the text. I do not know how I could better enforce the real character and spiritual significance of this occurrence than by placing it in

opposition to some such scene of worldly pomp and merely human ends. Let us, then, upon this morning of Palm Sunday, attend to some of the lessons which this event in the life of Jesus affords. I propose in the present discourse to draw three lessons from this transaction. First, from the incident itself; second, from the conduct of the multitude; and third, from the relations of the incident to the career of Jesus.

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First, then, I say, let us consider the meaning of the incident itself, the spirit and truth which the incident expresses. While the emotion and display of this incident appear to have come from the spontaneous action of the people, we can hardly suppose the occurrence to have been accidental on the part of Jesus himself. It would seem, from the fact that he sent for the animal on which he rode, that there was some sort of understanding, some preconcerted understanding, between him and those who owned the animal; that it was an act select and deliberate on the part of Christ. It seems, then, to have been an impressive illustration of his claims as the Messiah; a deliberate typical assumption of his real dignity. His earthly mission was nearly over, and the time of his departure was at hand. He had taught his truths and accomplished his works in lowliness and humility, making his appeal only to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see, leaving it to man to believe for the very works' sake. But he did not avoid any indication of his true rank or glory that came in his way. He did not go out of his way

to declare himself the Messiah, though he avoided no rational announcement of that truth, no such indications as came practically to hand, or lay, so to speak, in his path in the providence of God and the course of his duty. And this appears to have been one of those occasions; and the circumstances of the hour which he thus deliberately selected, combined with the enthusiastic feeling upon the part of the people. With them it was an act of spontaneity. His name had gone abroad; the fame of his wondrous works had reached distant multitudes, who had come up to Jerusalem. Especially had the popular mind been stirred up by the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And now, as Jesus came riding in this manner, so symbolical of his peaceful glory, the enthusiasm of the people, bursting over all restraint, conspired, with the circumstances of the occasion, to illustrate the real character of his office. They were probably unconscious of that which afterward appeared in its clear and full propriety as a real representation of the Saviour's true dignity, as a fulfillment of prophecy. If you will look at the sixteenth verse of this very chapter, you will find it stated that, "These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him."

Therefore, in considering the grounds of this transaction, I say that it is my belief that this solemn

entry into Jerusalem was a deliberate act on the part of our Saviour; while the spontaneous action of the multitude, kindled by the suggestions of the scene, aided in illustration of the truth which he intended to convey, and which became more clear to his disciples as time rolled on, and as the transaction stood out in the bold relief of its own peculiarity, but especially in its connection with kindred events. But, my hearers, the meaning of this act of the people, on the way to Jerusalem, not only stood out clear to those early disciples, but its fitness is very evident to ourselves. For, however typical the act may really have been, we must consider the spirit of the act in itself; we must consider its spontaneousness, and the acknowledgment which that very outburst of enthusiasm really carried with it. It was not formal upon the part of the people, but an overflowing of enthusiasm long pent up. Christ was acknowledged to a certain extent in his day; not clearly seen as the true Messiah, simply because he did not appear in the preconceived traits of the Jewish Messiah. But, so far as the people were concerned, Christ was known, and honored, and felt by them; and he was crucified at last through a cabal of the politicians at Jerusalem, working upon the minds of the people, rather than by the people themselves. And, I repeat, the long pent-up enthusiasm which had been created by his wonderful works, by his deeds of mercy, by his beneficence that had streamed into so many hearts—this enthusi-

asm flowed out here upon this occasion, when the multitude was already excited by the suggestions of the great annual festival at Jerusalem; and with this spontaneous offering they came and met the multitude that had accompanied him from Bethany, and followed him into Jerusalem. It was a free-will offering, kindled by the works and the beneficence of Jesus Christ, by the manner of his life, which, beyond all royal insignia, all material tokens of any greatness and power, they could not resist. It was the culminating, crowning hour of the Saviour's life, the hour preceding the completion of his mission, the fulfillment of his martyrdom. Typical as it may have been upon the part of Christ, it was a spontaneous homage from the people to the glory and beneficence of the works of Christ. And as he passes before us, as he rides through the ages, as his glory with every advancing year culminates in new operations of his spirit, and new demonstrations of his truth, I ask you is not this the kind of homage which we are not only disposed to give, but, by the very force of circumstances, so to speak, are compelled to render him; homage to the life, homage to the character, and homage to the works of Jesus Christ? And notwithstanding any minor and technical perplexities; notwithstanding any historical difficulties that may here and there environ some of the questions in regard to the New Testament; notwithstanding the interpretation of texts which may trouble us, or which, with carping

critics, may be deemed inconsistencies here and there in the mere letter, I repeat, the glory of Jesus, the spirit of Jesus Christ, the greatness of the works of Christ overwhelm all these, and, when we really contemplate him, compel from us such an acknowledgment as that which poured from the lips, and waved from the palm branches of the people on the road to Jerusalem.

Our homage must be free, must be our own homage. Jesus Christ does not claim it of us, whatever his claims in themselves are; he does not demand homage to him any way, merely because we have received a traditional notion of his greatness and glory. He does not want that kind of homage. He stands today before us, in the record of the New Testament, in the works of his spirit, in all the excellences that flow out of his life. What he claims of us is our free-will offering of acknowledgment of his greatness; not merely in regard to his dignity in the universe, in regard to the doctrines which he taught, but of himself. And it is a remarkable thing, that all who believe on Jesus are united in their homage to Jesus himself. They differ, if they differ at all, in the forecourts of the temple; they differ upon questions of dogma, upon matters of creed and opinion. But the moment they come into the presence of Christ himself, they acknowledge the same glory, the same excellence. And he claims it of us as an offering of our own hearts; not as something which we receive of

cold tradition from others. As he rides through the ages, a vaster throng, far more vast than that which gathered around him upon the slope of the Mount of Olives, gathers about him ; a great multitude that no man can number ; the morally blind, whose eyes have been opened ; the spiritually deaf, who have been made to hear ; the worse than physically dead, who have come into newness of life ; tearful mourners, who have felt the greatness of his powers, and the peace he has conferred ; poor, crushed hearts, who have known the balm of his consolation ; all who have been touched and have been blessed by Jesus Christ, swell the long retinue, and give homage and honor to his name. Wherever the church-bell rings out to-day, wherever it touches the hearts of men with any suggestion or any meaning, there is truly a Palm Sunday ; not of outward offering, but of inward homage, just as men can appreciate the real greatness of Christ, and know what he has done for them, and what he has done for the world. Homage, I say, not ceremonial, not formal, but spontaneous, real, genuine, out of the depths of the heart ; this is the homage rendered to the practical working of Christianity ; this is the homage given to Jesus Christ.

Beyond all questions which have disturbed many of us in the present age, all questions of historical evidence, of textual interpretation, are the practical workings of Christianity in the world. It is idle to deny this power. Men may attribute the advantages of our

civilization to this thing and that thing. But the deep spirit of all the best movements of society come from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And the individual heart, not only in its deepest but its highest enterprises, not only in that which it has received of comfort and strength, but that which it has done in the spirit of duty and in the spirit of self-sacrifice, acknowledges the working and power of Jesus Christ. And, I say, this practical working of Christianity claims an homage as free, as loyal, as glorious as that which saluted him when he came down from the mountain. And it is in contrast to the homage which any other conqueror or leader can claim ; in contrast with that, or any such temporary, vanishing, earthly glory, splendid as it may have been at the time, which graced the march of the Persian king. Here are the simple claims of that spiritual truth and love, working in the bosom of society, to lift up the down-trodden, to purify the unclean, to heal the sick, raise the dead, and make humanity at one with itself.

In the movement of that host down the mountain there was a spontaneous heart-offering. It stands there as a proof of the influence of Jesus Christ. Unless we take the New Testament and throw it wholly aside, unless we consider it a sublime fiction, the spontaneousness of this offering is in itself a proof of what Christ was. Deeper than all theories, better than all sharp, intellectual statements, is the effect which Christ's life produced on multitudes, as seen in

that march down the mountain. And better than all sharp, intellectual statements, better than all mere logical arguments, is the same kind of effect which Jesus Christ has produced upon the world through all the ages that have followed him. I remember a most convincing statement of a writer in his reply to Strauss; he says that it was not only some sick Galileans whom Jesus healed, but humanity itself lying impotent, which he blessed and touched, and it arose, took up its couch and stepped forth far from the threshold of the old world. The impression of Christ's spirit upon the world, the actual, practical effect which has been produced, is the great argument for the truth of Christianity, and for the truth of the Saviour's mission. Will any one say that this all sprang from nothing? Is it possible that it is a sublime myth, a shadowy invention? Have the hearts of men been moved, from generation to generation; have their souls been inspired by sublime ideals of duty; have their tears fallen less bitterly; have their hearts beat with higher resolve; have they been enabled to do nobler and grander works, from the inspiration of nothing? Or was there such a life, and were there such works as those of Christ, embracing in their influence the multitudes immediately about him, which works, growing deeper and deeper in impression, throw out wider and wider circles as the world rolls onward and the generations of humanity increase?

The impression which has come from the life and

from the works of Christ, the spirit of that life and of those works—is one of the great lessons which I take from this transaction that comes before us to-day; and I learn from it the fact, that the truth does get honored at times, even in its own time; that a prophet, even in his own day, is not wholly without reward, without some acknowledgment of his claim. That truth, though it may have to struggle a great while in the world, and is oftentimes obscured and thrust aside, is yet never without its effect at any time. There never is a word of truth spoken that does not reach some heart, that does not touch some soul. There never is a truly noble life that does not have its influence even in its own time, as a sun-burst through the clouds on a gusty day will manifest itself here and there. And if it reaches no other class, you may be sure it will touch the people. The truth of God, the love of God, manifested in many a humble disciple of Jesus Christ, will reach the great heart of the people in some way, and will be carried on and wafted through ages. Oh, I thank God for those broad, deep human instincts that are ready to receive the truth; that are the soil that God has prepared for the seeds of truth to be dropped in. Learning bristles with logic and with philosophy; pride and respectability oppose the truth. Learned men never lead the march of humanity, as a general thing. Sometimes there have been men whose great, deep human nature has been richer than their learning. But the merely intel-

lectual man, the merely learned man, to say nothing of fashionable people, of respectable people, of those who hold on to popularity and stand in high places, the merely learned man hardly ever leads the vanguard of humanity. It is the people, after all, whose great pulse throbs to a mighty truth, whose warm hearts, in the destiny of things, see enough of the truth to say, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Thank God for the instincts of our hearts that are never corroded, never quite covered up, that never wholly die out, but which will still receive the truth and hold it until a better era comes for its blossoming and for its victory. It is so with any truly good life. Live truly, live to your convictions, hold on to what you deem to be right; let what assaults will fall upon you, let what calumnies may blacken you, you may be sure that somewhere or other your truth and your goodness will be felt and acknowledged, and that you in the end will know, if not here, then hereafter, that you did not live without your influence, or without blessedness. Jesus Christ was honored for what he was in himself, for what he taught, for what he did, for the spirit of his teaching. Such is the significance of the palms they strewed before him on that day, and which we in spirit strew before him to-day.

II Let us, in the next place, consider some of the lessons which are to be drawn from the conduct of the multitude upon that occasion. It is said in the

chapter from which the text is taken, that the disciples came out to meet him. This word "disciples" is used here in its widest sense, because the Greek word used in the other gospels is translated multitude—the broadest term—meaning the general crowd or populace. Therefore the word "disciples" means here simply followers for the time being—those who thronged around Jesus. It is not implied that they were disciples in steadfast belief and earnest conduct, but for the time being, as followers and admirers of Jesus. No doubt there were in that crowd loyal and persistent believers—those who had handled the word of life, and knew that it was such—those who had felt its efficacy in their own souls, and who clung to it in disaster and adversity; but the great mass of the multitude was made up of more fickle elements—the same that make up any great multitude or mass of people—the same that make up what we generally call the public. And what was the character—taking this definition—of their feeling and action upon that occasion? They were mostly impressed by the spectacle for the time being, just as any mass of the people generally are. The reputation of Christ was great. They did not look any deeper than that. It was a time of general rejoicing, and they were ready to be moved by any excitement—to be lashed into enthusiasm by almost any consideration set before them. For in a little while this same multitude became a disappointed one, and turned

right against Christ. He did not carry out the expectation that they cherished when they beheld him riding triumphantly into Jerusalem, when all the symbols of royalty, garments, and palm branches, according to the Oriental custom, were strewn before him, and they had begun to think that the Messiah had come. They had looked merely at the outward symbols of the Messiah; and when he descended into Jerusalem and resumed his humble and lowly ways—went out of the city at night, went into the Temple and taught his simple and sublime truth, showed no signs of the expected Messiah, assumed no royal dignity—except, perhaps, the significant act of driving the money-dealers out of the Temple—when he continued in these lowly, unobtrusive ways, they began to think it could not be the Messiah after all; and when the cunning demagogues among the Scribes and Pharisees had worked upon their minds and hearts, they were ready to turn right round; and in a few days after these sounding hosannas which greeted the march of Jesus, you might have heard the hoarse cry, breaking, like the surge of an angry sea, around the judgment-hall of Pilate: “Crucify him! crucify him!”—“Not this man, but Barabbas.” It was the fickle element that helps constitute public opinion.

// Now the lesson that I wish to draw from this incident is this: that we should consider the grounds and motives from which we honor Christ, or Christianity which is the embodiment and expression of Christ.

Christ demands something more than our fickle and transient homage. He is not truly honored by mere emotions. Almost every man gets glimpses of Christ's truth and glory, just as the multitude got glimpses of his earthly Messiahship. Almost every man gets now and then glimpses of the beauty and power of Christ's religion—has religious moods—is melted to tears—is inspired with enthusiasm. The crucifixion of Christ—how many has it moved to tears? The thought of the wounding nails, the lacerating thorns, the spear-pierced side—the thought of the mere bodily torture and anguish which he underwent, moves a great many. But how much is that compared with the real significance of Christ's crucifixion? What is all the torture and agony compared with the spirit manifested therewith? Many people seem to think if they are moved to tears by some presentation of the truth, and feel for a little moment ready to make good resolutions, that is what Christ requires—merely a kind of emotional feeling—an enthusiastic reference to him. My friends, he wants something more than this. We all have such Sabbath revelations. Almost every Sunday is a sort of Palm Sunday in this way—that we are ready in the tide of our emotion to strew branches and cast garments at the feet of the Redeemer. When we get glimpses of his doctrine of the Father, so sublime, and so tender—when the glory of the great truth of immortality, which he has demonstrated, blazes out upon us—when in any way his love, majesty, and

greatness come before us, and we can contrast it with our own unworthiness—then does the meek and lowly one ride before our mental vision exalted, and we shout hosannas and cast palm branches at his feet. We do not need simply to think and feel about Christ upon the Mount of Olives; when the world lies beneath us, and the great Jerusalem of traffic, strife, and temptation, yonder. We want to honor Christ by our action down in the streets of Jerusalem—right down in the mire, toil, dust, and heat of daily traffic—in the midst of the selfish worldliness of life. We want something of that kind—not merely a swell over a congregation of the thought of his sorrows, sufferings, and agonies, that passes away like a gust of wind. We want to honor him, not as he rides in pomp, or as he is presented before us in a point of rhetorical attraction, but as he walks down in the Jerusalem of daily life.

We should render that honor to Jesus that is faithful and persistent. There were some who had it in that multitude. There were those poor women who had known the blessings of his goodness—who had felt the greatness of his love and the balm of his consolation. Perhaps they said very little when the crowds were shouting around him. Perhaps they hardly thought, in their intense reverence for him, of even plucking a palm branch, or strewing a garment in his way. But when the dark hour came, when Peter meanly shrank, when Judas betrayed, and the rest were scattered, these lowly women stood at the last hour by his cross, and

at the first dawn of the Sabbath were at his sepulcher. We want such a kind of honoring of Christ as that.

Of course there may be variations in men's religious moods. No man wants to keep on a level. Even if he is on the high table-land of thought, he wants to get a little higher. Let us be thankful for peculiar moments—for the glimpses of heaven that break in upon us and close up again, just as on such days as we have had during the past week; there has come a vision clear up in the empyrean blue of heaven, and then it has been covered with clouds. It is a great thing to have these thoughts that lift us above the ordinary level—these glimpses that do not recur always; but even these uplifting moments that come rarely, should leave us higher when they pass away; but above all things, they should leave us with the controlling element of Christianity in our souls—not the emotional element merely—not a fitful honoring of him, but such honoring as makes it a constant, persistent truth in our hearts and lives.

Again, Christ demands something more than public and formal honors. To-day he will be honored in I know not how many churches. There is a grandeur in the old Roman Catholic service that, when you take the mere poetry of it, heaves a man up almost above this world. And to-day, all round the globe, from the white-crowned Andes to the hot plains of Africa, millions and millions will be chanting the same great theme, and in spirit, as it were, casting palm

branches before Christ. There will be a great acknowledgment of his name and his dignity; but how much of him after all in the heart—how much real life-surrender and loyal service? He does not want merely public and formal honors—such as come from the rituals of churches—a traditional and ceremonial acknowledgment—but that of the heart.

Christ is exceedingly honored in professional respectabilities—in very zealous professions of orthodoxy, of reliance and dependence upon his truth. He is honored a great deal in this respectable matter-of-course way. How many are indignant, or deeply horrified, if the Unitarian or Universalist denies Jesus his real rank, as they call it, in the universe! They are very zealous and officious about the dignity of Christ's rank, lest he should be lowered from the height of his Godhead; but, at the same time, while they have such a vivid apprehension of his rank, how much of his spirit have they? Why do they not see that real homage is not in the apprehension of his rank in the universe, but in the possession of his spirit.

On the other hand, many Universalists and Unitarians are very zealous for the truth of Christ, as they term it—for good and right doctrines concerning Christ and salvation. How much have they honored him—what is the worth of their correct doctrines about him, if they have not smelted his doctrines in their own souls? What is the good of this breadth of salvation if it has no experimental depth, and has not entered into your heart?

Much of this respect for Christ is only dead, formal respect—respect for the mere symbols and usages of religion. So men show their respect for the Bible, by bringing it into courts of justice, making a statute-book of it, and reading it before judge and jury. Why don't you make it the oracle that will prevent such acts as lead to courts of justice? Why don't you cherish it in the private sanctuary of the soul, oh, adulterer and murderer—oh! man in the evil hour of temptation? Why don't you read it, and make it an oracle there?

Men have a great deal of respect for the clergyman on account of his office. I do not want any such officious respect. I do not want any of that feeling for the parson as a sort of embodiment of cold ecclesiastical formalities—for instance, that kind of respect for the clergyman that will check a man from swearing in his presence—"Ah, I beg pardon; I see there is a minister present." Never beg my pardon for swearing; if you don't care about offending God, you need not trouble yourself about offending me. Oh, this miserable, mean kind of respect that is felt for the mere formalities and decencies of religion, when Jesus Christ is turned out of doors! Respect for men—respect for the clergyman and for his office! Respect him for what of Christ there may be in him. If in any way he follows Jesus—if in any way some of the associations of the beneficent works of Christ cling around him—in some uttered word of truth,

some deed of mercy—then honor that; but do not honor religion in an ecclesiastical and formal way. Oh, this formal respect that will bring, a few weeks hence, multitudes to our great annual festival, when large corporate societies hold their anniversaries, and loud-mouthed orators will proclaim what those societies have done for Christ, while, at the same time, they practically may deny the most holy sanctities of humanity in their daily life. A kind of shriveled, bigoted Christianity, written in broad phylacteries, printed in almanacs, emblazoned on door-posts, paraded in laws and institutions, but Christ denied! Whenever there is a popular hungering and thirsting for any unrighteousness, then all the formal, institutional, professional respect for Christ goes. Whenever the claims of God's image cut in ebony are persecuted, and popular passion is aroused, away goes respect for Christ, and out comes "Crucify him!"

Christ is not honored by mere popular and formal respect. He wants not merely the honor of the people in the mass—in the multitude—but he wants individual honor and homage. He wants each one to give him what he really feels in his own heart, and not the hosannas of the crowd. Sometimes men join in the popular demonstration, merely because it is popular. If this is unreal homage; if it does not come out of the heart, it is just as unacceptable to God Almighty as real neglect. All that Christ is after is the heart. Jesus went about as a man searching for a lost treasure.

He went to the poor, downcast sinner, and tried to find his heart. If he could get it, it was all he came from heaven to claim. All he is striving to do to-day is to get your heart. He wants no mere profession nor sounding hosannas. It is a dreadful thing to think that the same possibilities are in us that were in the multitude that followed Christ. You think it was an awful thing for Judas to betray Jesus. How many betray him for less than thirty pieces of silver! You think it was a terrible thing for Peter to tell such a cowardly lie, and skulk from his master. How many do the same thing when they deny their religious faith—when they go to places where it is unpopular, and they shrink from avowing it, or perhaps disavow it altogether? How often do men entertain the same feeling that the multitude did when they cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" How often do you deny Christ, my hearer, in every sin that you commit? In every transaction that violates the doctrine of Christ, remember you crucify him, and open his bleeding wounds afresh. What value are all your waving of palms, and high-sounding hosannas, if your hearts are not cast at his feet?

Finally, let us consider the significance of this transaction in its relations to Christ himself. I have shown what was meant by it at the time, and what it really illustrates, but let us look at one or two specific traits that accompanied it.

How much that transaction, taken as a whole, with

all its incidents, reveals of the true glory of Christ himself. You see that all this outward splendor did not eclipse the real majesty of his nature. A weak man—a fanatic—would have taken hold of that event to have carried out his designs. The moment he reached the point of popular honor, the moment the crown was offered to him, although he might, like Cæsar, have been coy with it, and refused it twice or thrice, still that would have been his aim finally—to have an earthly crown, and wear mortal honors. But the glory of Jesus was not eclipsed by that. He did not make that his chief honor; he saw clear beyond it. He saw the coming tragedy, and the final waves of excitement that were to dash round him.

And there is one circumstance in connection with this event which reveals his real glory. As he began to descend the slope of the mountain, and Jerusalem, with its towers glittering in the sun rose before him, and all the feelings of the man and the patriot, and of the divine Christ as well as man, were awakened by the sight, with intense love he looked upon its sure fate, wrought by its blinded and obstinate people, thought of its past glory and coming terrors, and in midst of the sounding hosannas and waving palms the Redeemer stopped and wept. Those tears of love were brighter jewels than any that were ever set in earthly diadems. That was the true glory of Jesus Christ; it was not eclipsed by the outward glory, nor did he make that his chief object.

And see, too, the kind of triumph here signified and foretold by these waving palm branches and scattered garments. The coming triumph was something far different from this transient homage—which was a mere sun-burst, just as if Christ had been coming out of the mountain in a storm, and a sudden beam of the sun had flashed upon him, and then been followed by darkness again. The triumph that was really prefigured and indicated, was through sorrow, agony, and death—a triumph of self-sacrificing love. Do not misunderstand me. It was not the coronation of sorrow, of suffering, and of death. Oh, no, it was victory through sorrow, suffering, and death. That was the honor indicated.

And does not all victory come in that way? Was that a true victory or glory that Xerxes could have wrought, even if he had been triumphant, and conquered the earth merely to gratify his own passion for conquest? There is no victory in this world without self-sacrifice—without struggle—none that does not come through effort, often through darkness, through doubt, through fear, through death. It was that spirit of obedient and self-sacrificing love, through the darkest hour and against the mightiest obstacles, that was foretold by those scattered garments and waving branches.

And, my friends, we may share that victory. We do share it whenever we enter into that spirit. Oh, sorrowing one, in the hour of darkness, when your

faith begins to reel, when your trust in God begins to shake, but you say, "I will trust in him though he slay me—I will believe in him, dark and bitter as my lot is"—in that hour, rising out of that Gethsemane of darkness, you achieve something of the victory that Christ achieved. Oh, man, tempted, oppressed by many trials, overborne by passion for the moment, and threatening to yield, remembering how Christ overcame temptation in that victory, you may share Christ's victory. And in all doubt, all fear, all out-pouring, sacrificing love to the subjection of self, and for the good of man and glory of God—in all that we share the victory of Jesus Christ.

My friends, the most substantial honor for any human greatness is that which comes from those that in some sense share that greatness, or have some affinity for it—some kindred spirit of sympathy. For instance, the craftsman who builds a ship does not care so much for the compliments the mass of men may pay him, as for that spontaneous praise which a fellow-craftsman bestows, who knows what he has done. The musician cares not so much for the plaudits of the multitude, as for the commendation of some other musician who knows what is beautiful in his performance, and can appreciate it. So Jesus Christ is honored just as we share his spirit—just as we know something of his struggle, attain something of his victory, and can appreciate the greatness of the work he has wrought.

And so, my friends, as we go forth to-day to meet him, not with real palms, but, I trust, with uplifted souls, may we meet him with sympathetic spirits, and share in the greatness of his work. All who in any way know and feel his spirit of self-sacrifice; all who have suffered for conscience' sake, patient in sorrow, toil, trial, doubt, and fear; the martyr, from the bloody dews of whose grave blossom flowers of truth and blessedness for the world; old apostles who were scarred and beaten in his cause—all such have honored him and share his glory. Let us, my friends, honor him to-day. Wave the palms on all the slopes of heaven—in all the zones of earth. All who see and feel the true greatness of Christ and of his spirit, honor him. Wave palms in honor of Jesus—in honor of the spirit of obedient love which he manifested. Wave them on earth; wave them in heaven; wave them high, lifted up, streaming in token of ineffable victory.

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.—Col. iii, 1.

THERE can be but little difficulty in understanding the Apostle's meaning in this place. He has been speaking of those who were buried with Christ in baptism—those who were dead with him from the rudiments of the world. Now, proceeding with the association of ideas, he speaks of those who are risen or were raised with Christ. Those having entered into spiritual relations with Jesus are called upon to live on the same spiritual plane with their risen and ascended Lord. He exhorts them to set their affections on things above, not on things on the earth; by which antithesis I understand the contrast between the good and the evil, the pure and the impure—the estimates which are according to the standard of the risen Christ, and the estimates which are according to the standard of our evil affections and desires. I do not understand the literal heaven and earth to be referred to here, but I repeat, estimates from above as compared with estimates from below, of good as contrasted with evil.

If ye be risen with Christ—the idea is, live upon the same plane with Christ; live and move in the same atmosphere—in the very spirit of Christ. This was an exhortation fitted to those early Christians then, and it is an exhortation fitted to Christians now; but I wish especially, in this discourse, to call attention to the peculiar suggestiveness of these words: “If ye then *be* risen with Christ.” Whether we interpret this as referring to the external significance of the act of baptism, or to an internal experience and assimilation, it certainly indicates a resurrection in the present tense, and among the present conditions of the existence, and suggests the spiritual and instant significance of our Saviour’s resurrection.

Here, then, open before us those practical points which, upon this Easter Sunday, I propose to urge. This, I repeat, is the general proposition which is based upon the words of the text, that the most essential element in Christ’s resurrection, the most essential element in what may be called the resurrection of any man, is *spiritual* in its result. No matter where you place the resurrection, or with what mode you may arrive at it, its chief result is the up-rising and victory of the soul.

No man has ever drawn aside the vail of the future life so that we could look full upon its realities; for although Christ spoke of it as a truth, and demonstrated it as a fact, he left its chief features hidden in their own grand shadow. We look to-day into his

open sepulcher, and see angels sitting there, but we behold nothing distinctly beyond that point of vision. Yet in all the shapings of our fancy, in all the conclusions of our reason, our most essential idea of the immortal state is that it is a *spiritual* condition, a mode of existence in which we are freed from the despotism of the flesh. We believe that there we shall discern *absolute* truth with clearer vision, and that there we shall neither linger for appetite nor halt for repose.

Our language shall be speech of action. There we shall know even as we are known; there we shall see the great and good whom death took long ago—now the beatified over whom death has no power. There we shall commune with Christ, not through the distance of time or the perplexities of interpretation, but face to face. There no anxiety shall trouble our worship, no doubt overcast our faith, for we shall bathe in the stream of uncreated Being, and dwell in the eternal noon of God. Now, there is such a thing, to be sure, as conceiving a future state, an immortal state, too exclusively spiritual. We may refine it away until it means nothing at all, until we leave man nothing through which or on which his spirit can act; and you must remember that sometimes the most intense spiritualism is really the most gross materialism, and comes around to the same point by the minuteness of its details and the very elaborateness of spirituality. But while we should not speak of the immortal state as too exclusively spiritual, still with

that state into which the resurrection introduces us, we must associate all that implies deliverance from sensual frailty and blindness. Whatever may be its external scenery, its surrounding glories, these accessories will derive their harmony and their splendor not so much from any intrinsic qualities as from the light in which each soul shall perceive them. Set a man anywhere, in this world or any other, and the same place can not be the same place to the sinner as to the saint.

Now I proceed to observe that out of the doctrine of the essential spirituality of the resurrection state grows another proposition, namely, that the essential resurrection may take place even *now*, and among existing conditions. My friends, the great crises of man's existence do not consist primarily in changes of place, or of external fortune, but in changes of state or inward condition. Any one of you can verify this from his own experience, if he will. How common it is for a man to say, "I feel just as young as ever! The pulses of enjoyment are as quick within me as when I was a boy; nature looks to me as beautiful as ever; and my heart beats in sympathy to-day with all this fresh-springing life; and my faculties throb in accordance with the budding trees, and the bright sunshine, and the growing grass; I feel just as young as ever." Now, in saying this, a man virtually confesses that fading complexion, wrinkles, and gray hairs do not make any change in the real substance and quality of his being; and oftentimes, were it not for

some sharp intimations external to ourselves, we should not realize that we are growing old. We are often *reminded* by these, rather than by any interior consciousness. Yet a man of the most serene outward conditions; a man with whom time has dealt most gently, will find, if he will carefully examine, that he *has* changed. Perhaps he can not tell precisely when he passed from boyhood to manhood, but he does not take a boy's views of life any more. The most frivolous being does not make life merely a play-day, or a game with toys.

There are shadows on his thoughts that never lay there in boyhood; shadows of great realities, that, like the shadows of mountains to which we are getting nearer, throw themselves over the soul. His soul has another lens. He sees farther into the future, and his vision takes a wider range. It is so with every man, no matter how limited his education, how cramped his conditions. No man passes from the stage of his youth into the period of manhood without seeing things differently, or looking at them from a different point of view; and it is no compliment to a man to say that he is just the same at forty years of age that he was at twenty. What! has he gone through all these changes of life, has he stood at the marriage altar, and beside the death-bed, near life's light and darkness, its great mysteries, and known its cares and responsibilities? I ask, is it possible that any one can go through all these changes, and the spiritual depths

of his being be unmoved and unaltered? Therefore, I say, that, though it may be unconsciously to him, the plane of his personality has been shifted, and he has been enveloped by sadder shadows and serener lights.

The real crises of a man's being are not in any change of outward fortune, but in whatever has made him a different being; whatever has elevated or depressed the tide-mark of his thought. These changes may come to us suddenly; a change may come in a moment, producing more enduring results to us as human beings, than the long passage of years. The conviction, the resolution, the sorrow of a moment, may produce a greater change, radically, essentially, than the passage of years. For instance, when some great truth has flashed upon the soul. Do you not feel such a change sometimes when you have been reading the Bible, or hearing the uttered word, or have been somehow brought into communication with any great truth, flashing upon your soul like a star in the heavens, revealing relations you never saw before, and explaining anomalies that have troubled you all your life, lifting darkness from your intellect, showing you the face of God, revealing the attitude of Jesus Christ towards you, and making you see your own soul; making you a different man, producing the change of years by one sharp jet of truth.

So there is a transfiguring power in great and sudden resolutions, when a man raises himself up to a sacred purpose, takes hold of work from which he has

shrunken. Feeling its call—feeling its trumpet sound, what a changed man is he! Then things that were once so stubborn, come plastic to his hands; and the rim of possibilities, so narrow and rigid, widens and stretches far away, and he stands in a different universe. Oh, I need not ask many of you if sorrow does not make different beings of you. Who has ever looked out in a great bereavement without saying it is a new world to him now—a world, perhaps, grown tasteless and worthless, because his loves, following the gravitation of his grief, cling in the darkness of the grave; or it may be a world grown grander and more significant, because he has looked up into the immensities of God's purpose, and with the planetary sweep of faith. I say in either instance he is changed. Whatever the impulse may have been, for good or evil, it has made a different man of him. It is a terrible possibility of our nature, that a man may go on for years in the path of uprightness and respectability, and then in a moment some great sin trips him up, and away he goes, and he is entirely a different man after that.

Outward events only furnish *occasions* for change. The real crisis is the alteration of inward condition, and is marked by the position of the thoughts and movements of the will. It must be plain to you, therefore, my hearers, that the vast moral change which Christ's truth and spirit produce in the soul of a man is potentially and actually the resurrection

of that soul, and it may take place even here and now. Why, look at those early disciples of Jesus, at the change that came upon them all—Peter, James, and John—with no wider world than Galilee, and a fisher's boat for a theater of action—what a change was wrought in them when the lowly stranger came and taught them words of divine wisdom, and lifted them up by his holy and gentle spirit until their vision began to brighten, and their souls to kindle, and they were fitted for their great work! Then fell from the eyes of Peter the scales of Jewish conceit, and he saw that nothing is common or unclean. John looked beyond the vision of the present, had the apocalyptic sight, and saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. And those lowly men went forth with a power that was to shake and change the world; a power that was to survive when all existing kingdoms shall have passed away, and thrones and principalities shall have tottered and crumbled into dust. Think of the power that came over the Jew or the Pagan when Christianity first came to him; think of those Romans to whom Paul wrote, and those members of the Church at Colosse to whom he addressed the words of the text; think how, as they were buried with Christ in baptism, and an apprehension of his spirit and truth came from the ceremonies of their sins, what a resurrection it was. It conveyed the essential significance of Christ's resurrection. My friends, that same resurrection takes place now, when from sinfulness, selfish-

ness, and indifference we wake to spiritual realities, and live as though heaven were around us and God present with us. Now, of course I do not under-estimate the experiences of the future world ; I do not deny its different conditions in some respects ; but we must not draw too sharp a line between this present world and another. Innumerable errors have grown out of that conception. We must not think too much of death ; death's narrow bridge, over which Christ walked in coronation robes ; over which martyrs passed in glorious procession. Death in itself is a mere physical change after all, and we must not make too much of it. Any experience that a man may have in this world or any other, can hardly be greater than when over his dead soul there moves a divine influence, and in him are quickened holy aspirations ; when he stirs in the grave-clothes of evil habit, and breaks the bands of wicked will ; when he leaps from the sarcophagus of sensual indulgence, and comes into spiritual light. When the familiar earth shines in the brightness of immortal sanctions, and faith tears away the vail of the Unseen, and he realizes that he is a denizen of eternity and a child of God, then is there indeed a resurrection from the dead.

Now, I do not consider this matter merely figuratively ; I am not elaborating a fancy, and carrying it out to analogies. This is not merely a *symbol* of the actual resurrection. It is the main point in that resurrection. It is the main point for a man to rise from

his sins and his selfishness, his ignorance, and doubt, and fear, into the spiritual truth of Jesus Christ.

Now, we know but little of the details of a future life. Some people are very curious about it, and are anxious to look through every cranny into that world; to have a topographical description of those spheres, and get knowledge of all its modes of being. But from the very fact that Christ said but little about these things, I infer that they are not essential; they are not the main points in the system of the immortal world. What Christ said bears upon the conditions of the soul, and not on these surroundings; and for my part, I feel that it is as well that we do not have any microscopic intelligence of that hidden realm; but while the grand whole has been revealed to the telescope of faith, much has been left for imagination and for hope. To me there is something thrilling and exalting in the thought that we are drifting forward into a splendid mystery—into something that no mortal eye has yet seen, no intelligence has yet declared. There is something inspiring in this very expectation of a new and strange experience; in the wonder as to the new way and the new forms; which, it seems to me, is better for us than if we knew it all now. I think we know all that is necessary; that the essential thing in the resurrection is not the scenery or the method, but the uplifting of the human spirit from sensuality and sin. It is a change of state, rather than a change of place.

The old simile of the butterfly and the chrysalis I never thought a very forcible one, so far as it is used as an argument in proof of another world ; but take it in another view, and I think it is one of the most astonishing analogies, one of the most astonishing proofs of immortality, you can furnish. The sages of the ancient world had about as many natural arguments for immortality as we have. The human intellect struck at an early period upon the great points of analogy. And when they took up this beautiful simile of the butterfly, they taught a great truth ; though, I repeat, they did not prove the existence of another *world* by it, but of another *state*. Look at it ; the butterfly is in the same world as the worm from which the butterfly is evolved ; but oh, how changed, because of the new capacities unfolded in its own being ! So the resurrection of man may be regarded as the unfolding of inner capacities, the development of his spiritual being, rather than a translation to some distant sphere. The wings may be growing in his soul all the while, which shall spread when he bursts the chrysalis of his mortality ; and when that chrysalis bursts, he may find himself in no strange place, but moving with larger powers among familiar scenes. Thus, a man may find himself in another world in two ways. He can find himself in another world by going to a different quarter of the universe, or by seeing this world in new lights and relations. I do not say this is so, but simply that it may be so. It

may be so, and it may not be so ; we do not know anything about these details of the immortal life. They should be left where they belong, in the region of speculation. But what I say is, that it might be so, and yet all the essentials of the resurrection and of immortality be fulfilled.

Let me further observe, that I am not refining away a literal fact. I do not deny a literal resurrection or rising from the dead ; I do not deny that there is a great change to come ; I do not hold the old heresy of the resurrection as a past event. When I say it is *essentially* present, I mean that the substance and significance of the resurrection is spiritual. I would not deny any great truth that breaks upon us with the dawn of this Easter morning. I would not deny the fond hopes that are fanned into new life on this day. My heart throbs in unison with rejoicing Christendom to-day. I do not deny that there is a fairer region into which we shall enter through the doors of the grave. God forbid ! I have already said that the expectation of new realities, of glories that eye hath not seen nor ear heard, is full of inspiration for us. Let the best hopes we have be indulged, the noblest conceptions we have formed of that future state be cherished by us still. Let the intellect anticipate a condition when freed from the limitations of our mortality it shall drink from the springs of interior wisdom, and with its wings of thought beat upward through trackless paths of mystery. Let affliction cling to the hope

that its most tender and solemn dreams shall break into reality, that the departed ones shall come to it again; and their remembered faces, glorified yet the same, shall beam upon it when all earth's best relationship shall have become angelic, and love shall wear a crown of amaranth. Let faith look forward still with steady vision: for there is a rest for those who have prayed, and toiled, and suffered. But I say that the true life, the essential life of heaven, the power which Jesus bore triumphant from the sepulcher, first breaks upon us when we rise from sense and sin, and go forth with transcendent vision and unworldly aims. Not all the accessories of it, but the essential part of it, takes place here and now.

If I have interpreted the suggestions of the text aright, we come finally to consider some of the characteristics of a man who has really attained that spiritual resurrection. First, then, I say, he has a new life; within his nature there is a new element of being. It was not a mere figure of speech that Christ used; it was one of the most wonderful things he ever said—one of those utterances we can study through eternity, and still find something new in it all the while. It was not a mere figure of speech when he said that he came "that men might have life, and have it more abundantly."

He spake of a power and an inspiration which his truth and his spirit kindle in the human soul. He who has broken the crust of sensualism and the fetters of

sinful habit, and goes out into a region of knowledge, and duty, and love, has really more life in him than a man who runs on in the groove of worldly custom, and serves his appetite, and is bound up in self-regard. Indeed, it is the quality of all truth and all goodness, that when it becomes assimilated to the mind and the heart, it becomes a larger and richer quality of being in a man's nature, while error and sin really paralyze, and clog, and dry up his essential vitality. It is true, not merely as to the animal part of him, but as a totality, that a drunkard, a sensualist, a man who has lived to serve his passion, has not so much life in him as a man whose faculties are all clear, and whose habits are steady. An intellectual man has more life in him than a fool. How much life is there in an utterly selfish man, the valves of whose heart are all stopped up with sordid dust, and who draws nourishment for his whole nature only through one golden tube? Life, is not this the essential distinction between men? Clothes, rank, social position are rags and nonsense compared with the essential quality and quantity of man's being. It is life, degrees of life, that makes the essential difference between men. Is not this the reward of all effort for truth and goodness, that we thus acquire new life? The more acquaintance man gets with facts, the more he *lives*; he forms a vascular connection with them, and they become parts of *him*. He lives the past; he is Plato and Newton, Shakspeare and Channing; his mind

sweeps the wide orbits of Saturn and Neptune, and the splendor of the Pleiades glitters in his thoughts. And the more he sympathizes with excellence, the more he goes out from self; the more he loves, the broader and the deeper is his own personality; until his life fills the compass of the world, and he is quickened by the very heart of God. Surely, that is the profoundest punishment of meanness, and selfishness, and sin; that is the white heat and scorching point of hell, this growing meager and shallow in one's very being, narrowing down to the limits of the mere senses, until, at death, he is but an empty tabernacle to be tumbled into the grave. Surely, that is heaven—a wider reach of sympathy, a richer acquisition of wisdom and love, flowing in and flowing out from blessed souls forever. He who has come into communion with Christ, and risen with him; he who has experienced this spiritual resurrection, has received new life. In the next place, such a man has new *standards* of life. When you consider how it is with men ordinarily, you will see exactly how it is not with him. They speak and act without reference to God and eternity. They labor simply for earthly ends. They sow corruptible seed, and reap corruptible harvests. Business, pleasure, ambition comprise their entire ideal, and absorb their love. Heaven with its suggestive infinity, earth with its change and decay, death, and disappointments, and sorrow do not move them; neither do the manifestations of a divine excel-

lence, the call of innumerable blessings, nor the examples of true and holy life. They are of the earth — earthy — their ideals and standards are all in the world.

And the point upon which we fix our measurement, the center from which we start, makes all the difference in the result of living. Most men start from the world, and therefore come to worldly conclusions. Earthly things seem more substantial than heaven; dollars weigh heavier than truth, and outward success eclipses inward principle. It is a terrible thing when this strikes out and becomes an epidemic. It is a terrible thing when the chief men of a nation adopt a system of material standards, and neglect eternal justice, and have no vision of God. It is a terrible thing to see a great people with no official conscience, only a giant *consciousness*; only a heart of ambition, or a hand of power; pushing into "manifest destiny."

It is a terrible thing when the dome of a capitol shuts out infinite heaven, and the genius of history makes its record in a shadow, and men in the eclipse stumble over ancient landmarks, and liberty is stricken down, and cries, as with a voice of blood, from the violated ground. Oh! one wishes there might be a moral resurrection there, starting men to their feet and making them feel their souls, and shattering selfish policies on which the future will write epitaphs, shattering them like grave-stones; or else a real resurrection up from the battle-fields, and out of the tombs

of heroes and martyrs, who knew why they lived and for what they died.

And this is the characteristic of him who has a part in the spiritual resurrection. He knows why he lives; a great many people do not know or care. He knows the real conditions and sanctions of living. His movements are from the soul—from the base of the eternal sanctities. And so, finally, I observe that he who is risen with Christ has a new sphere of existence, a new compass of being; in other words, he already realizes immortality—it is a present fact to him. Such a man has an intense interest in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it has deep significance for him, because he feels it. Some men only reason about it.

I have endeavored, upon other occasions, to urge the natural argument for a future life—the argument from a man's own nature, and his capacity for immortality. It is a great argument, but that is one thing; it is another thing to believe upon the consciousness of faith, and experience that you are immortal, and this the true believers in Jesus Christ *feel*. They know it, because they are one with Christ. Oh! how that showed itself among the early Christians! Here is the difference. The doctrine of immortality was held to a certain extent before Christ came. I do not know that we have added a single grain to the natural argument since Plato spoke of it, and Cicero sat weeping for his daughter in his Tusculan villa, and wrote about it. What was the result of their reasoning? It went

a little way; but mark the difference. When Jesus Christ came into the world, the doctrine of immortality became a conviction; and I ask any skeptic to account for that. How was it before Christ? It was merely a philosophical opinion, limited to the few; but after Christ came, it was a mighty conviction pressing upon the souls and hearts of the many. What produced this result? There is no effect without a cause. Was there not some grand transaction that gave it such vital power, so that the lowly, the poor—the humblest—not the philosophers only—had such a conviction of it? Walk through those Roman catacombs; mark the difference there, between the epitaphs of the philosophers and epicureans on the one side, and of the Christians on the other. Go there, and you will find one of the Romans has this inscription, “While I lived I lived well; my play is now ended; soon yours will be—farewell, and applaud me.” Another says—“Baths, wine, and love ruin the constitution, but they make life what it is—farewell.” Then comes the tender stroke of a mother’s grief—“Oh! relentless Fortune, that delights in cruel death, why is Maximus so early snatched from me?” Turn and see the epitaphs of the early Christians. “Zoticus laid here to sleep.” “The sleeping place of Elipis.” “Valeria sleeps in peace.” Is not that an echo of those wonderful words that were uttered at the tomb of Lazarus? “He is not dead, but sleepeth.” Or when he said of the ruler’s daughter—“The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.”

Is not that, I say, an echo of that wonderful teaching of Christ, that death is sleep? What can have brought such change in the world? Whence did it come? Philosophical opinion produced nothing but epicurean carelessness and stoical contempt for death, or here and there a little jet of grander faith. But here a poor mother lays down her daughter, slain it may be, by the arrow of persecution, but she says—"She sleeps in Jesus." It is a sleep that knows an awaking—a short life that breaks into a glorious morning. I say that is a characteristic of every Christian. Immortality is not a mere opinion, it is a conviction, and the Christian realizes it *now*. Now, my friends, I urge upon you the power and significance there is in Christ's resurrection. I entreat you to rise with him—rise in his spirit; not only believe that there is another world for you when you have passed through the gateway of the grave, but be in the spiritual state now, and rise with Christ. How? By coming into communion with him.

Wherever you act and live in the spirit of Jesus, with tenderness, with love, with submission to the Divine will, and with self-sacrifice, there you rise in him. There stand the symbols of Jesus Christ; when you receive the significance of these symbols, they speak to you of all that tenderness, obedience, devotion, and self-sacrifice. Do you need this in your lives? Are you strong with Christ's strength in the temptation of the world? Are you able to go on

without Christ's influence amid the conflicts of life? Are you too good to come to the communion table, or are you too bad? You can not be too bad, as I have repeatedly said. Let any one who is conscious of weakness, darkness, doubt, and fear, come and rise with the spirit of Jesus; rise in his strength, and then you will get the real significance of Christ; you will get power over death, and sin which is the sting of death. Oh, come into communion with him amid the pealing bells and the anthems of this Easter Sunday; rise, rise evermore, and share his joy and his victory!

WAYSIDE OPPORTUNITIES.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.—John iv, 10.

ON the road from Jerusalem to Galilee there runs a narrow valley, which is the most beautiful and one of the most memorable places in that most memorable of all lands. Taking these two elements of interest, the natural and the historical together, we may call it perhaps the most remarkable spot upon the face of the earth. As it bursts upon the vision of the traveler in sudden loveliness, “green with grass, gray with olives,” with its orchards and gardens and rushing springs, the pleased surprise with which he surveys its luxuriance is soon superseded by the recollections which crowd into his mind. He remembers that from time immemorial it has been a sacred spot, a place of worship, and of national consecration. There Abraham halted under the terebinths of Moreh; there Jacob bought a field and found a home; and there in the beauty and fertility of the land were typified the blessings which the patriarch pronounced upon the son to whom he bequeathed it. There tradition tells us is

the tomb of Joseph, and there those brethren are buried who near this place sold him into bondage. There from Mount Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south, the tribes of Israel poured forth blessings and curses; there in this inclosure of great events and sacred memories still lingers "the oldest and smallest sect in the world." The Samaritans still worship there. The slope of Mount Gerizim is worn with their foot-prints, where, four times a year, they ascended for their solemn service; and at its foot stands their synagogue.

But one incident has made that valley more memorable than all things else, and has combined in suggestive unity its utmost significance of nature and of history—for Jacob's well was and still is there; and there Jesus on his way to Galilee sat weary at noon-tide, and talked with the woman of Samaria, unfolding for her, for all ages, for all people, for us to-day, the grandest truths of God and of the human soul.

There is much more in this remarkable passage than I shall attempt even to glance at upon the present occasion. I may hereafter from time to time refer to different points in the conversation; but I call your attention this morning to a few thoughts growing out of the particular verse which I have selected for the text.

The general lesson which in the first place I draw from this verse, is the significance and importance of wayside opportunities. Speaking after the ordinary

manner, this entire transaction was accidental, apparently unmediated on the part of Christ, as it was certainly unexpected on the part of the woman. Yet see the great results that came out of it, for the woman, for the people among whom she lived, for the disciples, and for all the world. My friends, let me ask you by what standard of preparation or of ceremony shall we determine the most important events, the real crises of our individual lives? In how many instances do we really go into transactions which involve our highest good or our greatest loss as unexpectedly as that woman who went to draw water from Jacob's well! The most momentous issues of our being are not in the circumstances and seasons where we are most deliberately conscious of them—in our closets, in our Sunday worship, in our moments of high resolve and meditation. In these we may become braced and prepared for such issues; but the issues themselves occur in wayside opportunities—in our business, in our pleasure, in the common contact of daily life. The woman of Samaria was looking for the Messiah, but doubtless she expected him to be announced with some heralding of wonder, in some array of visible glory, on Mount Gerizim. She did not expect to find him in the shape of a tired traveler sitting on Jacob's well and asking for a drink of water. How is it with you, my friends? You expect to find God at church, in the statement of some formal religious truth, or in some gush of sympathetic devotion.

Do you ever expect to find Him in humbleness of common events—in the duties, the cares, the temptations of your daily intercourse and your daily toil?

The character of a man—the real strength or weakness of a man—appears in sudden and every-day issues; in momentary jets of speech or action. One of these, as determining the essence of the man, is worth more than hours on occasions of parade and ceremony. It is one of the gravest mistakes in the world to be looking for great opportunities. I suppose that this is one of the most radical sources of evil. People are unconscious of the ordinary opportunities, and they are always waiting to be something good or great, for great opportunities. Why, I believe almost anybody could be a martyr on a grand scale; especially in our day, when it is popular to be a martyr, and there are no red-hot coals at the end of the business. In early times, in the times of the primitive Christians, martyrdom meant martyrdom. Then a man had to stand alone, with every friend stripped from him, and the public sentiment and fury dashing against him—martyrdom then was like that of Stephen, when the stones crashed in upon his brain, or of Polycarp, when the bright flame went curving over him. But in our day a good deal of martyrdom comes edged with gold or winged with aromatic breath. A bold journalist speaks out his convictions and receives martyrdom by increase of subscribers, and the privilege to be ten times as saucy as ever. A popular minister gains

twenty hearers where he loses one by boldness. It really makes more than it destroys. I repeat that the martyrdom of our day is a mere glimmer of light compared with what it was. But suppose there was such martyrdom as in the olden times, I believe there are hundreds and thousands here and everywhere who would be perfectly willing and ready to face it. There is something in standing up before the public gaze, there is something in man's nature when called upon to make a public exhibition of his principles and to uphold them, that would sustain and bear a man up through almost any degree of martyrdom. That was the highest testimony to the truth that the old Christian could furnish, but it would not be martyrdom that would furnish any proof of a man's real Christianity or moral principle and character now. But in quiet scenes of endurance, in obscure places of self-sacrifice, you shall find out what is in human character that is worthy and good. Take the wife tied to a drunken husband for the balance of her days, with no sympathy from friends, without any support at home, who in patient endurance, in night-long watchings and supplications, must bear with brutality and injury, and yet who nobly maintains her post, discharges the duty of a wife, and with her heart trusting in God bears all the afflictions laid upon her. There is a wayside opportunity for martyrdom that is grand, and Christ sees in it the true spirit of martyrdom. Take the spirit that bears ingratitude, labors for humanity, labors for those

who scorn it, there too is the serving of Christ by the wayside that constitutes true martyrdom.

So in doing and speaking the truth, without hope of reward, in shame and loss, not with any loud proclamation of independence, but without thought of anything but the truth—there is presented an opportunity for serving Christ. A man who has what some foolishly call scruples of conscience, but which, it may be, are the holiest words of God in his soul, and who holds on to these in his business affairs, wondered at for it, scorned for it, without making any proclamation of his principles, shows a kind of martyrdom that is never easy to endure. It is never easy for a man to do and speak the simple truth every day. It is a great deal easier for a man to mount the scaffold; it is easier to die at the stake, than it is for a man to do and speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, through all things and under all circumstances. Not that we are to affect truth-speaking by any means, for there is affectation even about that. Any bluntness and harshness that we may use, we may excuse by saying we are plain, blunt people speaking the truth. A great deal that we call frankness is impudence, nothing more nor less than that. To speak the truth, yet speak it in love, kindly, gently, and firmly, is one of the hardest things to do in this world. It is a great deal to do when we are challenged by our fears, but still more when challenged by our affections. I maintain that the hardest task is always to speak the truth, and nothing but the

truth, even when a man knows it wounds those he loves, and when the utterance jars upon his own heart. Nowhere is man so weak, thank God, as through his affections. You can scare a man into courage any day—as the duelist is always a coward; as the man who takes the law into his own hands, when the law protects him, is a coward. And sometimes the weakness of our natures, our affections, our sympathies, our gentle regard, will cause us to warp and bend the truth. To speak the truth, to serve Christ in the simple utterance of the truth every day—that is a great and glorious thing. It is often like martyrdom. In sudden ways come the crises of a man's being, not when he is prepared. For it is no temptation when he is ready for temptation; and no sin is powerful when he is prepared for it.

You meet Christ by the wayside in every duty that calls you from the wrong to the right. You meet Christ by the wayside in a thousand instances, but you think, perhaps, that these are of no consequence. If you saw Christ in personal presence, or in grand utterance, on some great occasion, you would be ready to serve him, but in common events and circumstances you pass him by. Then come the temptations of our life and the great crises of our being. It is not the machine itself, but the work it does that tests its value. A man may have a glorious mechanism of moral principles; it may be perfect and complete in everything; that is all very well; but how does this machine work

in the wear and tear of life? I repeat, these are often the crises of a man's being, the wayside opportunities. Oh, I wish, my friends, you would only realize how much of religion comes to us in this way—comes to us just as Christ came to the woman of Samaria. Now, it can not be denied that we are looking for grand occasions for religion, and the influence of religion. We are looking for religion in complex ways, in different forms, and in unreal shapes. We do not look for religion as we should, in common, plain, simple, free utterances. The position of Christ in this transaction illustrates what I may call the accessibility of religion. I speak thus because people think it a hard thing for a man to be religious. It is a hard thing for a man to live religion—it ought to be hard. It would not be worth anything if it was not hard; if it did not inspire us to the utmost effort—if it did not require us to be constant in our discipline, constantly vigilant, and constantly active, religion would not be worth anything to us. If we are to use religion as an element by which we come nearer to God and to Christ—by which we are to rise to the highest needs of our being, then it will be a hard thing. If it be not hard in the sense of living it out, then it would not be worth anything.

But religion is not hard to comprehend. Yet we are apt to regard it as a complicated affair. Some men know nothing of religion only in its ecclesiastical form. When they speak of religion, they speak of it

as it is exhibited in a sermon, in the prayer—that which is associated with the Church, that which is associated with a peculiar round of ceremonies. Religion only comes in an authorized and consecrated way, by priests and ritual, by the inflexible ordinances of time and place. They think there is no consecration except in the visible Church; no true ceremony except that which is according to ecclesiastical form; and so religion to thousands is simply a mass of complicated ceremonies. With others, religion is nothing but words, set phrases, words used with a peculiar meaning. You may let a sermon be preached in which all the great truths of the Gospel may be presented, in which the noblest incentive to human action, in which the clearest revelations of God shall be given, in which the truest statements about Jesus Christ shall be given, and yet if certain words and phrases be left out of that discourse, you will be told at once that it is a good moral sermon, but no religion in it.

There are thousands of people who regard the Sermon on the Mount as a beautiful specimen of Christ's teaching, but think that there is little of the Gospel in it. They turn for their religion to the epistles of the Apostle Paul, because there are a great many hard words and sayings difficult to get at, and curious and technical phraseology there. They find their religion there. They think that Christ gave the germs of religion, but that the real Gospel was elaborated by the Apostle Paul. All glory to the Apostle Paul for his

noble services to the Church! Thank God for those burning epistles circulating through all ages and through all time, winged with words of power and wisdom. But, my friends, the whole Gospel is in the teaching of Jesus Christ, every word of it, and all Paul, or John, or James ever taught are but suggestions growing out of the teachings of Christ. The entire Gospel is in the Sermon on the Mount; sometimes in a single phrase of it. Yet, I repeat, because religion is associated with certain words and certain ideas, men look upon this as simple, bald moralism, and look somewhere else for their religion. This is really why nature is excluded from religion. Natural religion is looked upon with suspicion. Here is a man who has built up in his mind a structure of natural theology; he is devout through natural theology; he believes in God through natural theology, and believes in the immortality of the soul in the same way. I do not say that this is a complete faith, but it is a religious faith, so far as it goes. Yet you will find a good many disposed to call this mere Paganism, and say there is no religion in it. A man looks out upon a beautiful scene in nature, and experiences an emotion, and praise to God goes up from his soul. Some think that there is no religion in that; that it may die away and leave the man as miserable a sensualist as ever. But there is religion in it; the emotion is a breath from God, awakened by the sight of God as manifested in nature; and the tendency of nature is to

lead us up to the highest truth and highest religion. When a man, from the study of nature, comes to feel a glow of gratitude to God; when, in this blue canopy that stretches over us, God seems to come near us, do not say that the emotion thus awakened is not religious.

This is not much, perhaps; but the people think there is no religious feeling at all except that got at church by the prayer, the sermon, the peculiar form, the peculiar phraseology. Some people will take a sermon that has the dullest monotony of phrases, and so long as these are special phrases, deem it eminently "religious;" but let the naturalist unfold his experiments or discoveries, glowing with the wonders of divine truth and wisdom, and relate them in his own fresh language, and there is nothing evangelical in this; it is only an exalted kind of Paganism. I say it may be, perhaps, but little more than the best kind of Paganism if he stop there. But you may take the avenues of natural science in our day, and they lead us to some of the grandest religious propositions and some of the freshest religious thoughts. If we go to nature with our pride, vanity, and cold speculation, we shall get nothing out of nature but pride, vanity, and cold speculation. But I want to know how much better than Paganism, Heathenism, Pharisaism a great many get out of the Bible, when they go to it with their hard, cold theology, with their self-righteousness, with their dark views of God and man. And as with the Bible, so with nature. You may go to one or the

other in the proper spirit, and God's truths and Christ's truths are simple and close at hand. It is a great thing, seeing how much God is in nature, how at the present day the human mind is dwelling on the great facts of nature, how, with the lens of the telescope and the microscope, nature is brought more and more to our apprehension. It is a great thing to see how God is leading us into religious life and religious truth. There are more avenues than one through nature, as well as the Bible. It is a great thing to see the spiritual truth that all nature symbolizes. Take that familiar and grand fact I saw this last week on the verge of Niagara. There were the crystal battlements; there was the rainbow round about the throne; there, ascending and descending, were outlines of spirit-forms, with their sweeping, glorious garments of white; there, in perpetual acclamation, with the voice of many waters, and with the voice of mighty thundrings, went up the ascription, "Allelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

Who can go out this beautiful spring day, when every leaf is an open hymn-book; when every blade of grass is as a reverent worshiper before God; when all is light and bursting beauty about us, and say that the man who sees the truth through these has no religion, because it has not come in peculiar phrases and under a peculiar set of words?

"There are two books [says Sir Thomas Browne] whence I collect my divinity. Besides that written

one of God, another of His servant, Nature—that universal and public manuscript that lies exposed to the eyes of all. Those who never saw Him in the one, have discovered Him in the other. Surely the heathens knew better how to read and join these mystical letters than we Christians, who cast a more careless eye on these common hieroglyphics, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature.”

Religious truth, the highest religious truth, lies close by the way, if we will only pluck it. As it is in nature, so it is in the Bible—the great truths are on the surface. They are not for scholars only. It would be preposterous, would it not, to suppose that God gave a revelation to man bearing upon his highest duty and destiny, and then made it so that only scholars and learned men could comprehend it—something we must shovel after with our dictionaries and lexicons, delving into ecclesiastical history to get at the great saving truths of the Gospel? The great truths of the Gospel are not below the surface. The great trouble is that the Gospel is too simple for most people. We seem to forget that the greatest things are the simplest things. You may take any course of education; here is a young man starting to learn any kind of profession; he thinks that that which is complex, that which makes a great noise, that which is bulky, that only is the great thing, and comes to know, only at last, that the greatest things are the simplest things.

So with the ancients. They had their cycles and

epicycles, wheels within wheels, a complex mass without any explicitness, until by-and-by Newton, Copernicus, and Kepler began to see it all fall in simplest law and beautiful harmony. So it is with the Gospel; it is simple; it has been deemed too simple. It has been interpreted as complex and deep until the great mass of the people have been repelled from it. They have come finally to feel that religion is something very hard to get at. I repeat that religion is the simple truth that Christ uttered by the wayside, and lies upon the surface of our Bible in its divine beauty.

Such then being the significance and importance of wayside opportunities, especially in matters of religion, I ask you, my hearers, in the next place, to consider how Christ used his opportunities. He made them the occasion of a great and effective religious work. How suddenly, how instantly, before the purpose of his spirit the circumstances around him became the cathedral, pulpit, congregation—everything! Christ did not need outward occasions to consecrate his work, but with his work he consecrated outward occasions.

The freedom and spontaneousness of Christ's teachings ever fill us with fresh wonder. There is no teacher—their never was—so perfectly independent of times and places, so perfectly capable in himself to make all times and places consecrated and effective. Why was it? Because religion in Jesus Christ, if I may so speak, was a real matter; the spirit of religion with

him was a real thing, while with men generally it is the most unreal thing in the world. People when they talk about it put on a face and assume a voice which they do not when talking about anything else. Indeed, people sometimes think a religious truth can only be conveyed by a sort of holy whine, which has gone cantering traditionally through the pulpit from age to age, a peculiar form of speech. In order to express religion in a different way from any other great interest, a sepulchral voice it assumed. It is properly called a sepulchral voice, for the religion it is used to convey is dead. There is little of it but husk and emptiness; it is an empty and useless idea. You hear a man talk about religion and talk about business, and look at the different influences of the two subjects in his tone and manner. Business is a great fact in his life, but religion is an unreal thing; and he knows so little about it that he endeavors to talk about it in some strange way. Hear a man talk about his God—the holy, infinite Father—and look at the constrained manner he assumes. Then hear him talk about the love to his children or a benefactor, and see how his heart gushes over his whole face, and how his features become illuminated, and his entire expression corresponds to the thing he is talking about. Why this difference? Because God is to him an unreal thing, a mere specter hidden behind a veil of mystery, while the child or the benefactor are real objects present to his heart and his thought. Hear a man speak of a

great patriot or philanthropist, a noble man, and see how differently he speaks when he speaks of Jesus Christ! Now this unreal way in which we hold religion makes religion unreal to others. I am willing to give men all the excuse they can have. I think one great reason why religion is not a more prevalent power and spirit, is because those who profess religion make it unreal—make it vague. That evidently is the reason why it has no vital power over their hearts and lives. Now with Christ it was real; it was in his heart, in his soul; it was the great reality of his whole being; and, consequently, wherever he was, that reality transfigured the scene into a proper occasion and condition. True religion is a most pervading, and yet most natural and unexclusive element. The man who is truly religious never forces his religion upon other people. It is not one thing with him; it is not a set of words, or of doctrines, but it is his whole life. His religion goes wherever he goes. If the conversation takes a religious turn, whatever he says upon the subject comes spontaneously, just as Christ's did. You feel a religious presence in the man's character and life. That is better preaching than words. We know the truth of that trite proverb, that works speak more than words. Such a man has no occasion to force religion upon others; it comes naturally from him; and whether he speaks directly of it or not, there is in him, in his life, in his action, that which has its influence; and he, in some manner or other, manages to

convey to you an idea that religion is not one thing, but in a high sense everything. How spontaneous and natural in Christ, then, was this religious truth and spirit! Look how slight the incident! The woman comes to draw water, and asking for a drink, Christ goes on touching naturally upon the spiritual gift he had to bestow, the spiritual water which springs up into a well of life; until convincing the woman of his divine authority, he passes to the highest revelations of God. There is nothing forced in that, or constrained; it was all free, spontaneous, and natural, because the religion of Jesus Christ was real. This conversation of Jesus with the woman of Samaria, I think, is a great lesson on preaching, as were all the lessons and teachings of Christ.

I have said that there never was such a teacher. You may put Christ where you please; you may set him up beside Socrates and Plato, and speak of him merely as a good man uttering the truth, strip him of all glory of divinity, and at the same time you can not deny this: That never a man taught as he taught. There is a great deal of truth in what the multitude said: "Never man spake like this man." The multitude had been so long used to the dry, husky, technical teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees, that when they heard the Sermon on the Mount, they drew a long breath and said: "Never man spake like this man," and no one ever did. Why? Because he saw radical truth everywhere. He took a little lily grow-

ing in the summer light, and what a missal of divine glory it became—what a lesson of God's goodness! He saw the bird steering its way through the air, and it became at once an illustration of Divine providence. He took nothing but a grain of mustard seed, and the whole kingdom of God was involved in it. Wherever he turned his eye he found central and radical truth, and struck out of it something right before the people, that they could take hold of. Now, my friends, this is the power of all effective preaching. It comes home to the heart from realities. Some preaching is simply the preaching of abstract doctrines of mere logical propositions, building up a sharp intellectual theory, and at the mere end of it making an application perhaps to practical life. The whole of the rest is useless, and the application is not perceived by two thirds of the people who have not followed the subtle, sharp, shrewd, intellectual propositions at all. The real preaching passes from the life up into doctrines, not from abstract doctrines down into life. It is based upon the realities of life. When you can jam a man up against a great fact of life, and ask him, How now? What does this teach you? What does that say, O man, to the deep heart within you? What does that speak to the aspiring thirsty soul? When you can do that, there is power in preaching; and if it is only the leaf of the lily or the wing of the wild bird, it has infinite power the moment it presses home the great reality of the truth which it contains.

Preaching has its greatest power when it rests on great realities. If you have to go far off to find a God, your faith must be weak. If a man has not a proof of God in his own soul, in his own conscience, I am afraid you can not convince him of God by any of your logical argument. He is more apt to be convinced of God by the touch of God's light that falls glittering upon the insect's wing.

Do you want proof of immortality? If you do not feel it; if your heart and consciousness do not tell you of it; if some great fact of life has not brought it to you—some great loss, the open grave of some friend, or the consciousness of some limitation against which you chafe and beat—if that does not bring immortality home to you, you will never be convinced of it; you won't be convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ by historical arguments—by evidences like those in the large volumes of Dr. Lardner. If the truth of Christ is spontaneous in your soul, if you have a sense of such love as Christ gives you, and no lack of living water to your thirsty spirits, there is proof of Christ. Does not your own consciousness say, O, I need such a manifestation as that love in the face of Jesus Christ! O, I need such love as that to inspire me with the hope of my rising above sense and sin! I need such an assurance of God's pardoning mercy as that which beams upon me from the cross? If you do not feel the need of it in your soul and in your own life, you won't feel it from any theological arguments. Ah,

my friends, it is in little wayside realities that we come upon great truths; we descend through Jacob's well to eternal depths, and in a draught of water we learn the need and efficacy of divine truth.

Finally, I want you to consider the woman's opportunity in the instance before us. It was a two-fold opportunity. First, the opportunity of ministration. I have already illustrated this in speaking of opportunities in general—that there are occasions for one to do a great deed sometimes; but in thousands of instances in life our opportunities are in the common affairs of the world. She had the opportunity of ministering to the necessities of Jesus Christ. She did not know that he was the Messiah she was looking for, who was to tell her all things. She only saw the humble traveler sitting upon Jacob's well. She knew not the great privilege that she had. My friends, how many of you would gladly avail yourselves of a similar opportunity—how many here would be glad of an opportunity to minister to Jesus Christ in person! How many would crowd to do what they could for him for the sake of reputation, if for nothing else!

No, we can not now minister to Jesus Christ. He needs not our human help any more. No more is he incased in the necessities of the flesh; no more does he need anything that human hands and human ministrations can do for him. But what is that most sublime and wonderful doctrine of Jesus, That inasmuch as ye did it unto the least one of his brethren, ye did it unto

him? There is the great law that is laid down for us. With every needy man, with every weak, dependent claimant by the wayside, Christ comes to us again as he came to the woman of Samaria and asks for our ministration, and often in ministering to them we "entertain angels unawares." Do you know what you do when you minister in unselfish love? Do you know what good you may awaken, what flagging powers you may restore, what courage inspire? O, manifold, more than men stop to think of, are the occasions in this life for ministration. But remember, whenever they are called for, whenever they are given, it is to Christ, and that you have an opportunity like that which the woman had at Jacob's well. Remember, when humanity is rejected or despised, because it appears in degraded shape, with some contemptible associations—that whenever you desecrate this great humanity for which Christ poured out his blood, you desecrate him. I do not know a grander truth in the Gospel than this broad doctrine of Christ's oneness with humanity. As we help and comfort humanity, so do we minister to Christ; as we despise and abuse it, so do we reject him. The great platform of the Gospel is love for humanity, comfort for humanity, and whichever way your effort or influence is given, you either minister or withhold that ministration.

The second opportunity was for reception. This is the exact point which Jesus urges in the text, "If thou knewest the gift of God," by which I understand the

opportunity which this woman had. It is interpreted differently. Some say that it meant the person of Christ; some the gift of the Holy Spirit symbolized by the water. It was all involved in the fact of opportunity. "O how would you improve it if you knew what opportunity you had!" I think that one evil is that we do not know our wants, and therefore we do not know our opportunities. Man thinks he wants this thing and that thing. He thinks he wants wealth, pleasure—some earthly thing. If he gets it, he finds himself mistaken. If he does not get it, he suffers tantalizing want. He does not know that he is thirsting for the living water, and the great trouble is that he does not know what he wants. We do not know ourselves as we should. Sin is not only a sin, but it is an error. Sin is a tremendous error. It is a mistake to be a sinner; it is a great mistake to forget God and Christ; it is a mistake to turn away from him as he sits by the wayside offering us living water. But it is guilty ignorance, not excusable, for a man ought to know himself. He is looking out of himself to other things—looking for some earthly object that perishes in the using. O man, go down into your heart to-day. Look into your soul—look into your own spirit, and know what is within you, and see your real wants; then you will recognize the humblest of opportunities. Then the Sabbath assembly will not be dull to you; then you will see Christ by the wayside, and gladly open your souls to receive the living water.

THE BLESSING OF THE MERCIFUL.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.—Matt. v. 7.

I REMIND you that, in these discourses on the Beatitudes, I am speaking of them as great spiritual laws, the blessing not being attached as an arbitrary appendix to some quality of mind or action, but being unfolded in the very action or disposition itself. It is in the nature of things that “the meek” should “inherit the earth;” that “the pure in heart” should “see God;” that “the merciful” should “obtain mercy.”

Let us in the first place ask, who are the merciful? To what disposition of mind, or mode of action, does this beatitude belong? The merciful are all the truly sympathetic, the loving, the helpful. Now, my friends, let us not conceive this quality of mercy as something that we are rarely called upon to exercise, or as something required only in peculiar and exceptional conditions. We are so accustomed to associate mercy with some official station, with some prerogative of executive or sovereign power, that we may forget how often it is demanded of all men, in almost every relation of life; that as we are all weak enough, in one

way or another, to need mercy, so there are times when the weakest is strong enough to bestow it, and is called upon to exhibit it. The instances are innumerable which call for the exercise of mercy. Take a familiar case—take some occasion when we hold, as it were, our brother's life in our hands—a portion, at least, of his most valued and dearest life—his good name, his reputation among men. His reputation, not his character, for that, thank Heaven, men can not give or take away—that, in its own intrinsic quality, stands alone with him and with his God. But how often our brother's reputation lies at our mercy! How often a whisper may be as a fatal dagger's point, and a shrug of the shoulders as a judicial sentence! How often his own acts, misinterpreted by us, or for the moment unconsidered on his part, place him at our disposal, and, in his weakness, throw him upon our magnanimity, our pity, our charitable construction. And, alas! how often men take up the alternative, and instead of rendering the best construction, adopt the worst. How they cast him who needs their mercy into the shadow of the darkest interpretation, and, taking the clew of the overt act, brand his motives, his life, everything, with the blackest stamp! It is a sad fact that no coin circulates like scandal, or so rapidly accumulates compound interest. And though it may not be very merciful for me to say this, I am afraid that there are many people who feel grievously disappointed when the occasion for scandal collapses—proves to be base-

less—and the capital upon which they have traded with such winged words, turns out to be counterfeit and a lie. I suppose it is reckoned a piece of worldly wisdom to be suspicious, and to think the worst of men in general. It may keep us from disagreeable surprises and guard us from imposition.

The man that shrewdly suspects all other men, who is continually upon the look-out against treachery on their part, I suppose thinks he is guarded against all surprises and imposition on their part. But I believe it to be a much better piece of wisdom to think the best of men rather than the worst. I had rather be cheated, once in a while, and hold to the general tenor of this trust, than to wear a double magnifying lens of suspicion, and be always safe. Nay, am I not cheated in this way just as much, and more? By adopting this suspicious method, I both cheat and am cheated. I cheat many an honest man of his just claim upon my regard and confidence, and I am cheated out of the blessedness of whole-hearted love and kindly association. Therefore the unmerciful man is most certainly an unblest man. His sympathies are all dried up; he is afflicted with a chronic jaundice, and lives, timidly and darkly, in a little, narrow rat-hole of distrust. He has no free use of the world; he breathes no liberal and generous air; he walks in no genial sunshine. He loses all the bliss that comes from sympathy, from open-heartedness, from familiar and confiding associations. More than this, such a theory of

humanity is an open self-condemnation. Whence has he derived this theory? Upon what premises has he built it up? Surely, from his own self-consciousness, from his own personal experience. There is darkness within him, and so darkness falls upon everything. His own motives are sinister, and so all humanity squints. The suspicious man, the man who distrusts all other men, and so is unmerciful to all, reveals himself as a mean man. For I urge, that not only is this an unmerciful view of men in general—it is an unjust view. The goodness of people around us is not at all a mask. There is much that is “sounding brass and tinkling cymbal,” but also there is sweet and true music. I believe those men who seem to us the worst, seem worse than they really are. I believe there is some vein of light in the darkest heart—some extenuating influence in the basest life. Now, it is well not to run into extremes, but to regard men as they are—creatures with mixed motives and complex natures. But if an extreme we must have—if we will adopt a sweeping theory respecting mankind in general—I repeat, it is better to think the best of them rather than the worst, and run the risk. At least this devolves upon us, not only as an act of mere mercy; but of justice, that where we do not know the actual state of the case, we are bound to adopt the best interpretation and give it the most charitable construction. We are bound always to render mercy wherever mercy can be rendered. Moreover, I believe that merciful treatment

is always lawful treatment, wise treatment. I have said at other times that mercy is not a weak sentiment—is not a winking at guilt. It does not deny the necessity of punishment; it is not a withholding of retribution where the retribution is demanded. It is not that puny sentiment that lets the one go and the many suffer. All mercy is justice, I say; all justice is mercy; and on the other hand, where there is no mercy, there is no justice. The truly just act—the act that punishes the criminal according to the nature of his deed, the act that rescues society from the evil effects of criminal life, that makes the criminal himself feel the greatness of his guilt—is a mercy to the criminal as well as to the community. Only remember that we can not grade the degrees of guilt; no human tribunal can punish the sinner. We are not the judges of the sin in our fellow-men. We can not weigh the greatness of any guilt—that belongs to God Almighty; but so far as the act bears harmfully upon society, so far, no doubt, it is mercy both to society and the criminal to restrain him. There is no mercy, there is no justice, in taking the life of a man under any circumstances whatever. It depreciates human life to hang a man; it is not an expedient of safety; but to confine the murderer, to restrict his power, to say, You shall do no more evil, is mercy and justice both to him and all other men. So, I repeat, mercy is no weak sentiment. It is not in opposition to justice; it is justice, while conversely justice is mercy; and wherever we can exercise mercy with

safety to the community, and with respect to human laws and human rights, and with a due sense of human guilt, there we ought to exercise it.

In how many thousand instances does a man hold in his own hands, therefore, the power of manifesting this blessed quality of mercy! You are an employer; there is some boy in your employment who commits his first transgression, perhaps not really conscious of the greatness of the evil that he does. Perhaps in an unguarded moment he takes from you something that belongs to you. You do not injure society by exercising mercy toward that boy. How often is it the case that your judicious act of mercy, tempered by justice, has been the means of saving that boy from open exposure, from public punishment; how often it is the salvation of that boy! Do you suppose that it is justice in that case that the penalty of the law shall brand him—that he shall be marked as a criminal, that he shall be self-degraded?

This is an instance which men of business will tell me often occurs, and can there be any doubt as to what justice is in that case? So I say, when a man's reputation lies at our mercy, we are bound to make all the allowance we can for his action. If he does a foolish thing, let us be disposed, as far as possible, to make allowance, to think what may have been the peculiar circumstances under which he did it. We are all called upon to exercise this prerogative of mercy. Not only in helping the poor and needy, but in innu-

merable forms come the opportunities for the exercise of this quality. Although "mighty in the mightiest," it is glorious in the weakest; it is a crown of glory even in the most obscure. What if all men bound their fellows literally—made them live up to the mark in everything—what kind of a world should we have if we had a society that was not tempered with mercy, with allowances, with extenuations, with a spirit of forgiveness? What a terrible, what a Christless state of society that would be!

Now, you perceive that to the exercise of this quality something is necessary; a broad, genial sympathy is required; we must enter into a conception of their weakness; we must transfer their situation to ourselves; we must make their consciousness our own consciousness; nay, we have only to interpret their weakness by our own, for humanity is so constituted that the basest criminal represents you and me, as well as the most glorious saint that walks on high. We are reflected in all other men; all other men are embodied in us, and we have only to keep this fresh, living sympathy in active operation to know how to exercise this mercy in our own heart.

In one word, at the root of the whole is love; because by love only can we sympathize with anything. Just in proportion as you love anything, just in that proportion you sympathize with it. If it is repulsive to you, if it pushes you from it or you push it from yourself, you can not enter into any sympathy with it,

because you do not love it. Therefore, as we love all men, so we can sympathize with all men; and as we sympathize with all men, so we are prepared to exercise in all cases this quality of mercy.

Such is mercifulness, and such, as indicated, are some of the occasions for mercifulness.

But still further under this head, I ask you just to consider how qualified to speak of it was he who pronounced this benediction. He was the very embodiment of mercy, the clearest expression the world ever saw of divine and universal sympathy.

I think with what incongruities of emotion this beautiful beatitude has been mingled, with what formalities of worship its life has been smothered, from what lips of pompous pride it has died away into an unmeaning sound, how it has been profanely associated with the most stubborn hatreds and the most cruel acts! I think how terribly true it is that—

“Where He hath spoken liberty, the Priest
At His own altar binds the chain anew ;
Where He hath bidden to life's equal feast,
The starving many wait upon the few ;
Where He hath spoken peace, His name hath been
The loudest war-cry of contending men.
Priests, pale with vigils, in His name have blessed
The unsheathed sword, and laid the spear in rest ;
Wet the war-banner with their sacred wine,
And crossed its blazon with the holy sign.”

I think, my hearers, of all these *Christian* incongruities, and then I think how much this beatitude implies, coming from his mouth whose life was a perfect

translation of its meaning. O, the mercifulness of Jesus Christ! There is a topic never to be exhausted—there is a topic almost too great to be approached in its glorious magnitude—the mercifulness of the doctrines which he taught, of the acts which he performed!

Mercy, that is the Gospel! the whole of it in one word. There are great truths gloriously beaming around the horizon of that revelation forever; mighty sanctions are there to inspire us and to lift us up; but the essence of the Gospel is its mercy. It is a revelation of exhaustless love and power unto man, the brightest light in the darkest spot, the greatest condescension in the lowest estate; the holiest brought to the basest; the all-pure to the deeply sinful.

Look especially at the Gospel of St. Luke; see how full it is, how it overflows with that characteristic of mercy, a Gospel not preached to the rich, the sainted, and the respectable, but to the degraded, to the cast-off, to the alien; think of all the glorious passages in that Gospel that are burning in our memory. In it we have the evidences of the love of Jesus Christ ranged like pictures in a gallery. There is the penitent woman, and the publican who said, God be merciful to me a sinner! There are the lost sheep, the prodigal son, Zaccheus, the healing of Jairus' daughter, and the good Samaritan. There are the tears of Jesus falling fast over doomed Jerusalem; there is the echo of that divine expiring prayer: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Oh, my hearers, that is Jesus Christ, that is the glory of Jesus Christ—those instances of mercifulness. We feel the beauty of the text when we look at this; we can see what it means only when we are confident that there is in it an incomprehensible, vast love that human nature has not yet reached, certainly that human action has not yet realized, a vast compassion that transfixed us with wonder, gratitude, and praise. Indeed was Christ qualified to say, “Blessed are the merciful.”

But, in the next place, let us consider what the beatitude is. We have seen what the condition of it is; now let us consider what the beatitude is. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” See how inevitably true this is, even in our relations to our fellow-man, how it comes not as an arbitrary sanction, but reacts as a law, a necessary condition of things. I need not spend time in illustrating the commonplace proposition that “like begets like,” that what we call the world is generally a reflex of ourselves; that if you find a man always complaining that the world is cold, you will find that he has never brought anything into the world to warm it, that he is himself probably a personal lump of ice set in the midst of it; that if you find a man saying that the world is all base and hollow, tap him, and you will find that he will himself ring hollow.

And the merciful man, as a general thing, will obtain mercy. He who has always had a kind excuse

for others, who has looked at the brightest side of the case; he who has rendered his pardon and his help when he could to others; who has never brought his fellow-man into any strait by reason of not helping him, depend upon it, when he himself is brought into a strait, he will find the mercy which he had bestowed flow back upon him in a full, spontaneous stream; he will make the world merciful by his mercy, and so fulfill the law set forth in the text. Then, again, this law is exhibited in our relations to God. God has declared it; all over the Bible He says that the merciful shall obtain mercy. In the Old Testament and the New, in the Psalms and in the Gospels, you find the same law. "With the merciful," says David, "thou wilt show thyself merciful." And Jesus Christ in that twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, in the perpetual sanctions of his kingdom, says to those who gave to the hungry, who gave to the sick, and to them that were in prison, "Come, ye blessed."

And this is no arbitrary law. But even here, though we may not be able to trace all the conditions by which God gives us mercy, we know He has established it as a law, just as He has ordained the law of the motion of the planets, just as He has ordained the law of the movement of the tides. So has He ordained it as a law that in our relations to Him we shall obtain mercy if we are merciful.

We can not claim it as of merit. The Bishop who lately died in a neighboring State, said, in his last

breath: "I have no merits, and no man has." It is a true word—that of the dying brother. No man has merits by which he will be enabled to go up to God Almighty and say, "You owe me so much." All he can claim of God Almighty is just this thing: Mercy, mercy, O God, because we need it—because we are weak, and frail, and poor.

But surely the merciful man can come with more confidence than the unmerciful man. He can say: "O God, grant me mercy! I make it no merit, but still I have endeavored, according to the light I have had, and the ability which has been granted unto me, to act kindly and to show mercy to others." I think such a man can throw himself with more confidence upon the Divine mercy than the man who has interpreted men's motives most meanly, who has denied them sympathy, and who has lived cruelly and coldly; and God has made it a condition written all over the Bible and all over the spiritual laws of man, that the merciful shall of Him obtain mercy, as well as of their fellow-men.

Let me, however, observe still further, that in considering the blessedness of being merciful, we must estimate the blessedness of the merciful spirit in itself. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain in themselves the spirit of mercy." Surely this is not an overstrained rendering of the beatitude. The blessedness of exercising faith is having faith; the blessedness of doing good is being good; the blessedness of being

merciful is in possessing the merciful spirit. Do you want more than that? Suppose a man does not give you mercy; suppose that in your strait men are harsh, cold, and uncharitable; no matter, you have the blessing of being merciful in the very possession of the spirit itself. Mercy in its own delightful work and nature is the highest known method of happiness. I repeat it, mercy in its own delightful work and nature is the highest known method of happiness.

We can not, of course, attribute changeful emotions to the Infinite Maker; we are lost on the great sea of boundless being when we come to talk about God. We can not say that anything makes Him glad or solemn; but if we might adapt His nature at all to our poor human conceptions, we should feel that even waves of gladness must go over the infinite sea of God's nature at the exercise of mercy, and that even He, in His unapproachable greatness and infinity, feels something of that joy which runs through all heaven at the exercise and exhibition of mercy.

We know at least it was the joy of Jesus Christ; that far down beneath all his sorrow, and all the sadness that stole upon his great life, he felt a deep, full joy in going about and doing good. Oh, we think of the sorrow of Christ; we think of the thorn-crowned sufferer; we think of the poor, weary traveler at Jacob's well; we think of the agonizing prayer in the garden of Gethsemane; we think of the buffetings and the revilings; we think of the crucifixion; and it is well to

think of these—of the deep sorrow they express and the cruel agony to which they bear witness. But do we ever think of the joy of Jesus Christ? That under all this sorrow welled a fountain of perennial bliss so deep and placid that he could say at last unto his disciples, “My peace I give unto you,” a peace which the world can not give or take away. Whence must it have come? In a great degree from the fact that he was rendering good to others. Whenever he laid hand on the leper, and he became clean; whenever he touched the eyes of a blind man, and the darkened lids opened to the light; whenever he spoke to a poor dumb one, and he burst out in thanksgiving; whenever he saw a poor old mother clasp to her bosom her restored son, gladness came over his heart; then there was joy in Christ! The joy of being merciful—there is no other joy like that upon earth.

At least for man there is no higher known method of happiness. The sources of human pleasure, perhaps, may be distributed into three classes. There is a low, base source of pleasure, the very lowest and basest of all; it may be called a fiendish delight, the joy that comes from cruelty, from torture. It is a sad fact, humiliating as it may be to us, that there are men who seem to draw a malicious relish out of the sufferings which they inflict. It was said of a bad, brave man, Benedict Arnold, that when he was a young man in an apothecary’s store in Connecticut, he used to stand in his door and delight in seeing the boys walk

barefoot over the broken glass scattered among the stones, and getting their feet cut. Is not this an index to his character? Is it not a clew also to his treachery and meanness, to his baseness and cruelty? So you can interpret the future man in the boy who delights in torture.

Mercy, moreover, is something that goes forth, not merely to humanity, but also to the poor animal which toils for us. Men have transformed into a universal maxim the saying that "the merciful man is merciful to his beast." So he is. The merciful man is merciful to the poor dumb creature that can not complain. How much unmercifulness is there even in your sport; in that which you call mere pleasure; in the delight in exercising to the utmost tension the speed of the horse! The cruelty may be unconscious on your part, but how much cruelty is there! And while I would have no morbid sentiment in this matter, still let us beware even here, how we wantonly abuse or sacrifice animal life in any respect. Life is sacred everywhere. It is a mystery, whether throbbing in the insect, beating in the pulses of the sparrow, or even crawling in that uncouth shape at your feet. I dare not wantonly take such a life which I can not give, and I can not give anything of that kind to the creature that is to day living in the spring sunshine and rejoicing in its beams. It is wrong. If my safety is not compromised, and if my need does not demand it, I have no right to take away even the coarsest animal life; and I say that the plea-

sure which comes from that kind of cruelty is the lowest and basest of pleasures; it is a fiendish pleasure.

Then there is a pleasure that may be called self-gratification—the gratification of our tastes, our appetites, and our individual peculiarities. To a certain limit this is lawful and commendable; but certainly the man who lives merely in this; who lives merely for the purpose of pumping gratification out of all the world into himself, and appropriating God Almighty's benefits without regard to others; he is the meanest creature in the world—nothing but a sponge with brains, sucking in everything and letting out nothing.

But there is still another condition of happiness for man, the highest, which is ministration to others. In the very exercise of this quality of mercy there is not only the source of good to others, but the highest delight to ourselves; for we must remember that Christ did not teach an extreme doctrine of self-abnegation. By no means; he did not teach man that he himself was nothing—worse than nothing—fit only to be thrown away; he makes his highest laws, his most powerful propositions, to apply to self. "Love thy neighbor," he said, not better than thyself, but "as thyself." He did not abnegate self; he gave self as the rule by which we should love others. You have a lawful standard; you know what constitutes your welfare; seek your own welfare in your own lawful sphere; seek that which is good and right, but love your neighbor as yourself. Christ did not give a different

standard; he did not say, Blessed are they who hunger and thirst, because they shall hunger and thirst, but he said, "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled." He did not say, Blessed are the persecuted, for they shall be persecuted, but because their reward is exceeding great. Christ did not do like a great many ascetics, make pain in itself sacred; sacrifice in itself sacred; he made pain to be held secondary to a great good. Welcome, pain, was his teaching, if I may serve the right by it; welcome, sacrifice, if I may serve humanity by it; but the pain itself, the sacrifice itself, were not worth anything.

So, blessed are the merciful, for the exercise of mercy is the highest delight for ourselves; it is the highest method of happiness.

And love; the most consummate expression of love is mercy. If a man loves all other men, how does he show it best, not only to them, but to himself? By ministering unto them in mercy, by helping them. How does the mother's love show itself? Blessed, sacred relation! that stands the nearest symbolism of God's mercy—the relation that the mother bears to her child. It is a constant blessing which flows over our lives, and is still strong even when we become gray, and the dust of the grave begins to settle upon us. Whence comes this love? How comes it except as an opportunity for a mother's mercy? In the long years of weakness and pain, love had its holiest expression. God's love is active mercy, that is all we know of it;

and it is the glory of God's love. I say, then, the highest bliss is the possession of the merciful spirit itself; and if we can obtain nothing else, we can obtain that—the blessedness of the merciful spirit.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” As I repeat, in closing, these gentle words, I can not help reflecting yet again upon the key-note of sentiment which he struck, in these wonderful beatitudes, upon the springs of being which he touched as the sources of true glory and real power. Oh, down below all the crust of human conceptions, of human ideas, he sank an artesian well into a source of happiness so pure and blessed that even yet the world does not believe in it. Only think of it! His words were very discordant to many of his hearers in that day. They were directly opposite to the spirit of all around him, and to their anticipations. There were the Jews expecting a Messiah, and not knowing that he was the true Messiah; they expected to hear from their Messiah burning words of indignation against the Roman oppressor, summoning them to gratify Jewish hatred and revenge.

But what were the words of Christ? To your tents, O Israel? Unsheath the sword? No; nothing of this kind. They were, “Blessed are the merciful.” Is there not something wonderful in the very contrast of the spirit of Christ with the spirit and tone of those around him?

Do you think, my friends, that an impostor—a man

who meant to deceive—would utter such words as these? Is not there something divine in the very contrast of their spirit and tone with that of those around him? And how is it now? These words, fresh as they are, commended and glorified as they are, are opposed to the conceptions, the spirit, the action, the world at large—so gentle, so deep, so far away, so noiseless are those beatitudes, as compared with the objects of human ambition, in the rushing tides of the world's movements. See what it is that the world grasps at—see what it takes as its vehicles of power and ideals of glory—and then tell me if Jesus Christ was mistaken—if he was teaching a doctrine too lofty, too divine for this world. Some will say, he never meant it for this world—only as a bright ideal of another—something to lead us upward and onward; but never designed to be realized here. Is that the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount? is that the design of the beatitudes?—something that we can not practice—something too deep, too pure, too divine? or are they designed for this world? And if they are—if that is their true glory and real power—it is a great question to ask, what has been their effect upon the world's history? And here what a contrast is presented between the teaching of Christ and the practice of the world. For eighteen hundred years this beatitude has been proclaimed, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and what is the state of the world even now? No doubt, to some extent—we may even

say, comparatively, to a great extent—that sentiment of mercy has leavened the world; but as yet, how far is the opposite spirit triumphant? We say that science has been serving the spirit of Christ's beatitudes—that it has been in reality the agent of the loveliness of his teachings; that it has helped to make men more merciful; that it has helped, by the vehicles of power, to weld nations together, and bring men's hearts into one. And what else has it done? Some of the most expert and wonderful things that it has accomplished have been in making weapons of war. Men kill one another now by chemistry and mathematics, by deadly weapons, to which science has lent all its energy and resources.

No doubt society has felt the influence of the beatitudes of Jesus Christ. We shall see an exhibition of it this week. These anniversaries are, no doubt, a result of the beatitudes—celebrations of Christ's mercy, each in a different way; some in a very narrow, strait-laced way; still, they are all based on the idea of mercy, and are beautiful illustrations, as far as they go, of the effects of Christ's teachings.

But, my friends, how far has this influence gone? What may be taking place in Europe this very day? Its fields may be bristling with a harvest of bayonets; the rumble of cannon may be shaking all the land from the Baltic to the Mediterranean; the cry of war may be going up under all that sky which spans the proudest domes of Christendom. Hosts may be marching

under cathedral crosses, and war may be pouring its terrible devastations through those humble hamlets whose best possessions had been the faith that sent up the morning and evening prayer.

O Piedmont! O Lombardy! O magnificent theater of Nature, crowned by God's sublime Alps! Even to day the Ticino may be red with blood, and the Po choked with slaughter. The clouds of war are hanging upon the ridges of the Alps, sheathing the lightning that is to be launched upon the fertile plains of Lombardy, and darkening with their terrible shadows her beautiful lakes.

And why? Because men do not believe that it is blessed to be merciful; because despots dare take the earth as a gaming-board, and men as counters, to play their mean, selfish, ambitious games in the face of God Almighty and the teachings of Christ Jesus.

How far is this beatitude believed? Is there any power in it, any glory? Yes, the power of God Almighty, the power of Jesus Christ, is in the spirit of mercy. Bayonets, cannon, human implements of war are weak before that power in the end.

Power! Where is it? Not in armed men, not in governmental facilities, not in fortifications, not in engines of murder. But I will tell you where there is power. Where the dew lies upon the hills, and the rain has moistened the roots of the various plants; where the sunshine pours steadily; where the brook runs babbling along; there is a beneficent power!

Mightier than the hosts of armed men are green blades, rising up in serried ranks, furrow after furrow, making ready for the harvest. For what would be human power without God's daily bread? What would be the implements of war if the earth should withhold its resources—if the sun did not shine and the rain did not fall?

Ah, we depend on God's mercy after all, and that is to us more than everything else. They must go down, the fearful symbols of man's passion and guilt, before the meek beauty of that power which was in Jesus Christ. That is true glory, and men recognize it. We embalm in grateful memory, not the warrior, not the soldier—though often we think too much of him—not the blood-dripping soldier, but the benefactor; above all, we place Christ, as a manifestation of the glory of mercy.

Oh, man, there is power, there is glory in the meek, quiet beatitude, although the world does not notice it. Wherever you manifest it in your daily walk, wherever you cherish this spirit of mercy, you will have Christ's power and glory. And remember, here and everywhere, that at God's right hand, when scepters have been broken, when the warrior's garments rolled in blood shall have been cast away, when the symbols of this earth's glory and power are dimmed—remember, even at the right hand of God, this is power, this is glory, enduring and divine; for "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

SEEING DARKLY.

For now we see through a glass darkly.—1 Cor. xiii. 12,

IN the first place, let us endeavor to get the meaning of these words. They occur, as you are well aware, in one of the most glorious passages of the Bible; that passage where the Apostle Paul, writing upon the troubles of the Corinthian Church, its contentions and pretensions, its evils of Jewish literalism and Greek license, pauses for a moment in the foaming tide of his argument, and melts away into that New Testament psalm of love—that wonderful description and eulogy of Christian charity. Having shown the Corinthian converts that this is the deep master-principle of the soul, without which all things and all performances are vain, and having, in lines of indelible brightness, traced the features which it shows amid the conflict, the sin, and the limitation of the world, all at once he rises into the assertion of its imperishableness, and with that thought breaks beyond all earthly barriers, and carries his readers away into that region in view of which all material conditions dwindle, and all mortal imperfections dissolve and vanish, while no

boundary is set to future attainments, and nothing is suggested that balks the idea of endless progress. The excellence of that state compared with our loftiest possessions and powers in this is as the completeness and freedom of manhood compared with the germinal qualities of childhood, and this earthly domain of facts and faculties is only a nursery for the soul; this little planet, that goes swimming through space, is but the cradle of the intellect. Our most regal thinkers think but as children yet; our guesses and prophecies are but as the babe's wisdom; our most oracular utterances are but the alphabet and fragments of the truth. "When I was a child," says the Apostle, "I spoke as a child; I understood as a child; I thought as a child." But even in that higher kingdom, where all the childishness of our mortality is put away, this principle of love—the mother's love, the martyr's love, the love of the good Samaritan, the love of God and man, the love of saintly sweetness and heroic sacrifice, this same love that throbs in weak human hearts, and, amid all these uses and limitations, goes forth to anoint, to bless, to endure all things, and hope forever—this same love abides there, and shows in its native realm the divine beauty which it has never lost below.

It is in delineating this contrast between here and hereafter that the Apostle introduces the simile of the text, holding up in view the fullness and brightness of that higher region. "For now," he says, "we see through a glass darkly." We must beware of a mis-

conception on account of this word glass, as it appears in our English version. It would more properly be rendered mirror; and in meditating upon this figure, we should think of the metallic mirrors of the ancients, in which things would be obscurely and vaguely represented. So this universe, so this life of ours, so this object-glass of being, which blends the two-fold action of our thought and the things upon which we think, so is this a mirror in which we now see but darkly and dimly, receiving only hints and shadows of reality. And this statement suggests the general current of my remarks at the present time.

“For now we see through a glass darkly.” In the first place, let me say that there is a literal significance in these words. It is a literal fact that here, in our mortal state, with our physical organs of vision, we do not, in any instance, see essential realities. We behold only the images of things. I need not dwell upon this elementary law of optics; I only urge the suggestiveness of the fact that our sensuous vision is a mirror upon which realities cast shadows. We may expect a more direct and intimate perception of these realities when this material organism is shattered, and when this spiritual faculty within us which is hidden beneath all this organism, really sees; when this is set free from these physical limitations, and goes forth into new and fresh conditions of action. As to the most common and intimate objects in the world around us, we only see as through a glass darkly. It is in this way

we see our fellow-men with double veils between ourselves and them—they hidden from us in a drapery of flesh, and we looking through the glazed windows of our own organism. How much do we actually apprehend? How much do we really know of them? They make themselves known to us only in shapes and outlines, only through the glass of expression which, if it sometimes helps reveal them, sometimes conceals them all the more.

It is the case with those with whom we are most familiar, who associate with us every day, and who mingle with us in the most ordinary transactions of life; it is the case, even here, that we don't see them, we don't apprehend them. That there are depths of their nature, features of their humanity, which do not come up and stand before us, and that may be by whose side we have toiled year after year, with whom we have communed in joy and in sorrow, in sunshine and in storm, there are many who might say to us, as Christ said in the closing hours of his ministry, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" It might be said, in many instances, by those with whom we are most intimate, and who are most familiar with us. And if this is the case in this comparatively limited and familiar circle, how much more is it the case in regard to the great community at large, those whom we encounter only occasionally, and under peculiar aspects, whom we see only in this angle of vision, only in this particular work? How much

more is it the case that we do not see them, or if we do, it is only as through a glass darkly? Little do we apprehend another's heart, or fathom the depths of another's humanity! What is the lesson that occurs here, by the way? Is it the lesson that we should think more meanly of our fellow-men, or more nobly, or, at least, more tenderly and more charitably? Surely, the latter suggestion is the correct one. To feel, to know—for it is the fact, that under the hardest concealment, under the roughest exterior, there is some fount of goodness, there is some element of tenderness, something soft and gentle, that shrinks from exposing itself to the world, and, perhaps, puts on this mask of roughness as an expedient of concealment; to think that the most careless and frivolous have their moments of deep thought and serious meditation; have their devout ways and devout hours—not shown, perhaps, as we show our devotion, not manifested by the words we use for similar things, but somewhere living in that heart, sanctifying it, bringing it nearer to God than we may suppose. I do not deny, of course, the reality of human sin and weakness; I do not deny that men are weak; that they are almost alienated from God; but I say, after all, so little do we know and see of that humanity with which we mingle, that we have no reason, even in the most careless and frivolous exterior, to question the existence of something like seriousness, a devoutness in some corner of that heart.

Now, the satirist, the man who presents us with

what he calls delineations of life and character, is not the man who knows his fellow-men best, after all. He speaks of men as if he did know them clear from the circumference to the center. He knows them, but only in certain conventional forms. He supposes that he strips off all conventionalities, and shows us men as they are; but this is a great mistake; he only shows them by standards that are just as conventional. There are certain hackneyed motives, and certain fixed ideals of men, by which he judges them, under the categories into which he supposes them to fall. I repeat, the revelations he makes in his delineations of men, of motives, and ideals, are only surface motives and ideals, after all; are just as conventional in their way as the conventionalities which he strips off. Humanity is almost infinitely concentric. Fold after fold you may strip off from a man's heart, and yet not see the real man after all. Only God pierces through all this outer rind of humanity, and knows what is essential and substantial there.

And you may be sure of this, that if ever one man is truly revealed to another, it is only by the agency of that great element which the Apostle extols in this chapter, the agency of love and its kindred element, sympathy. The lightnings of the satirist do not rend open the door of the deepest heart, do not reveal the sanctities which may lie almost dead and buried there, but they are there; and only man can be comprehended and known—if it is possible to know him at

all—as we approach him in the embrace, in the deep sympathy of a kindred love. In that way only can a man unburden himself and reveal his inmost nature.

And this only goes to show us, by its very rarity, the great truth of the fact that even our fellow-men we see through a glass darkly. So it is with the forms and objects of the actual world, the chemist, the botanist, the physiologist, men who are pursuing special sciences, pursuing them successfully into deep researches, and bringing out marvelous results. After all, how far do they go? How much below the rind have they pierced? How soon they are balked! The moment they touch upon essences, the moment they get below forms and positions, and certain relations of things, that moment it is all dark and impenetrable to them; that moment everything becomes as impalpable as the shapes that pass over the surface of a mirror. So science, with all it has achieved—and it has achieved a great deal for practical purposes that is glorious and useful; our science, so far as absolute knowledge is concerned, so far as the deep essence and real significance of things are concerned—our science is merely a catalogue of appearances; its terminology is merely a set of equivalents, words masking the deep facts which we do not know.

Men come, by the aid of science, to do a great deal with the outside world, to make a great use of it. The chemist boasts, at the present day, that in his laboratory he can almost reconstruct the original tissues of

the human frame; that he can bring into existence, out of the varied elements, the form of humanity, almost, with its curious organism, even with its sensitive flesh and muscles. But what then? He can not give life to humanity. He can not create thought. He can not make what he might thus curiously mold in his audacious attempt; he can not make that to be a living thing. And life itself, the element which quickens all, which glorifies all, he can not tell what it is; he does not know. It is a deep mystery which eludes his every attempt at discovery. How mind acts upon organization, who can tell that? What is the power, what is the process by which I move my finger at will, or by which I utter spoken words? How does this impalpable power, be it what it may, familiar as the thing itself is, how does it act upon my whole organism? One of the most recent authorities upon this subject tells us, that the absolute connecting link between matter and mind must always remain, as it is, inscrutable to scientific investigation. Astronomy is called the most complete of all the sciences. In some respects there are fewer problems to be cleared up in that great science than in any other. It is the oldest science; the heavens have revealed themselves to the eyes of men since the earliest ages. This great book over his head, he has been enabled to study from all quarters of the globe, even without the apparatus or the advantages of these modern times. Therefore it is called the most complete of all the sciences.

And yet are not the questions in Job just as significant, just as applicable to-day as they were when they were first written down? Are not the questions which came to him from out the whirlwind as deeply significant of our real ignorance with regard to this branch of knowledge as ever? On the magnificent mirror which stretcheth itself before us, we see Orion and the Pleiades; we see Mazzaroth, and Arcturus and his sons. But what do we know? We see it all as in a glass darkly, and that voice from within the mystery speaks to us as it did to his servant of old: "Declare, oh, man, if thou knowest it all!"

It is a singular fact, that objects which are the most remote from us do fall within the arrangements of the most complete science, which is a very suggestive fact. The problems—the objects of the study of astronomy are the most remote from us, and therefore they are the most complete in scientific arrangement. The nearest objects are the least comprehended by us. The nearer we get to ourselves, the nearer we get to our personality, the more deep the problems become; and this suggests the idea that astronomy is so satisfactory, only because we are not near enough to it to touch the real problems which it presents. Thus it is with objects; instead of becoming more familiar as they draw near, they become more obscure. Therefore no deeper, no more significant problems can man find in all earth than in himself; his own soul has the deepest problems of all.

And in all this he sees through a glass darkly. The most familiar objects—how the grass grows, how the fingers move—everything near us and about us, when we come to the essence of them, becomes to us unexplainable; we see our boasted knowledge is but a flickering form, but a representation of substances and realities. We do not grasp; we do not even see them; we behold them only as the reflection of realities from a mirror. And if then, my friends, it is thus with the more common and familiar objects; if it is thus with objects which, in some respects, are made apparent to sight, how is it with such realities as those which are confessedly unknown, or those which are known, to us, at least, only by intermediate revelations?

But to strike at once upon the great Object of knowledge—how must it be, from the very nature of things, with God himself? If the creations of God most familiar to us, if the forms of God's working which are most intimate are confessedly to us but as shadows of shapes upon a mirror, how must it be with the infinite God himself? Now, we do apprehend God to some extent. It is one of the mysteries, one of the glories of human nature, that an intuition of God, an idea of God, a thought of God exists in man's soul, and has moved his deepest life. But when we get beyond this idea, then we approach the particular revelation that streams full upon us from the face of Jesus Christ. How else is it but in a glass darkly that we behold the Infinite in His works? I have shown you that

we see only equivalents, we have only a terminology that expresses our ignorance. Him we do not see who controls the whirlwind, who directs the storm, who speaks in the thunder, and who weaves the banded harmony of the heavens, who has worked from the creation until now ; of Him we see nothing ; we behold Him only through His works ; we behold Him only as in a glass darkly. And so in regard to His ways, His hidden ways, His providential dealings with us, the method in which He disciplines us, the method in which He works upon humanity as a whole and in its individualities. Here, also, must we not, from the very nature of things, expect mystery and shadows, hints and suggestions—nothing like a full or comprehensive knowledge? Why, we can not take in the vastness of God's plan, surely, if we can not take in the essence of the least of His works ! Everything around us shows a plan and a purpose ; outward nature is orderly and harmonious, moves steadily to certain ends ; and we can not suppose that humanity and all the spiritual relations with which humanity is involved—that this is any more disorderly ; we can not suppose that in any department of God's working there is an aimlessness of purpose, of end, of plan ; and if not in the material world, much less in the moral world and the realm of human action. Therefore I say there is a plan. But might we not expect that from the very nature of God himself it would be vast and beyond our present comprehension ; and especially if we take up the analogy,

beholding the objects most familiar to us only darkly, shall we not see that this vast plan and life, and the universe which God guides, and in which He moves, must be beyond our comprehension, beyond the grasp of our thought, not to say anything of our perception?

We behold only processes, parts of things. As the child that might come into the laboratory of his father, the chemist, could not begin to comprehend from the transaction in which the father was engaged the great work at which he aimed, so we, children all of us, in a thousand years see but one of the processes of God Almighty, and yet we talk and act very often as though we saw the whole, and begin to challenge the Almighty because everything is not made clearly consistent with our idea of His goodness. We see everywhere in the world incongruities, mishaps in national and individual matters, and we may say God can not be good—forgetting that from the very force of the analogy that I have been urging, it is not to be expected that we can see the end or comprehend the law or the movement of the Infinite One.

And, moreover, as on the surface of this earthly mirror we with our perceptions see the most glorious objects only in shadow, with the silvery lining of the cloud turned from us, while the terrible darkness unrolls before our eyes, so it is with all God's most beneficent agencies; they appear to us only in shadow at the best. The brightest gifts which God bestows upon us come to us only as shadows of the real brightness; we

see only the darker side of them. The glories of God's love, great as they appear to us, are not to be compared with the glories which are to be revealed. The manifestations of His wisdom and His power, stupendous as they are, are not to be compared with what is yet to be seen. And thus it is that even the most beneficent providences of God sometimes appear like the ministers of destruction or the messengers of despair, while they are the best things that God is doing for us, perhaps His dearest work for us; in this very fact we see, as it were, only the reverse side of things, only the dark shadow of the great reality that is to be revealed—in this fact, I say, we may perceive that some of the brightest agencies that God sends from His love and wisdom may come to us veiled in darkness and seem to us terrible ministers of wrath and cruelty.

We see not the substance of things, only the transient aspect of things. As the mirror catches the vision and for a moment daguerreotypes the thing before us, so our thought, our knowledge, catches the transient aspect; we do not see the substance; we do not see the whole thing. And thus how many things do we misinterpret, from our momentary perception failing in all that appertains to a clear knowledge and sure comprehension! In the most common ways we sometimes sit in judgment thus upon God, not knowing, not recognizing as we ought, in our littleness and weakness, that we are judging only from the transient aspects, and that we can not see the great realities.

I spoke to you some time ago, and remarks that I hear almost every day urge me to speak again, upon this very common sin, as I call it, of murmuring about the weather, for instance; that God Almighty, in His infinite working of the springs of nature, draws over us a vail of cloud which balks our trade and spoils our business, or hinders some party of pleasure, and we begin to murmur at it as though it had been some terrible evil; when we do not think how God is working to fill up the great cisterns of the hills, to supply the depths of the ocean, and to feed the roots of the plants; for His vast bounty that we can not comprehend, in infinite wisdom is sending these moving curtains of cloud for a result that by-and-by will all appear in glory and in a manifestation of His goodness. What a sin and a shame it is for us to murmur at these little temporary inconveniences to ourselves; to say, if they bear upon us a little harshly, that therefore they are harsh and bad, not realizing this very fact that I am urging, that we see only the transient aspects of things, and can not take in the great operations of the whole!

And so it is in our sorrow, and loss, and disappointment; we ought to take this same kind of reasoning in respect to loss as it is, sorrow as it is, and disappointment as it is; we ought to say, from what we do see of God—we ought to say it is transient, it is not the whole, it is not final, we do not grasp the entire substance of it. Now, this is not a theological expedi-

ent to get rid of difficulties in the action of God, and to explain mysteries. I do not pretend to explain mysteries; I do not pretend that we can explain all things; I should not think that we had an immortal nature, or that there was an infinite God, if we could explain all difficulties. This very fact would prove to me that God was not infinite. I do not know what kind of a theologian he is who walks up to a perplexity and says, "Oh, yes; this, is all reconcilable; I can explain it!" I urge it as a law of analogy, that we are seeing through a glass darkly even the most familiar things; we can not penetrate to their essence, or comprehend them; and therefore, when there comes a sorrow, a loss, a bereavement, I say it is but a transient aspect of the matter that we see; we are not in a position to judge upon it; we are to catch what light comes to us, especially through Christ Jesus, of God's goodness, and test it by that, and reconcile it by that, feeling that now we see through a glass darkly. So is it with death. Dark shadow as it is, is it not the shadow of a brighter phase in our existence? Does not even what we do know teach us this? Do we not see in the kingdom of nature, in the material world, how the process of death is but a transition process, and that everything moves onward by it to some higher development—is it not so? Is death a permanency in the natural world? Then can you suppose it to be a permanency in the moral, the spiritual world? It would be well for us all, if we could take up that

faith which has been so beautifully uttered by one of the German philosophers: "While we mourn for a man here, as in the dark realms of unconsciousness there might be mourning when a man first beholds the light of the sun, so above there is rejoicing when a man is born into that world, as we, citizens of earth, rejoice with joy and welcome those who are born to us." There is as much joy in the upper world for those who have left the darkness and shadow of this behind, as there is in this when we welcome out of unconsciousness those who are born to us. We see but the transient aspects of death; it is but a shadow on the mirror; it is but a flitting phase of things, while we judge as though we saw the whole. Now, this is a lesson for us, for our faith in all the workings of God Almighty in this world, in these mysteries of life, that we see through a glass darkly. And I infer that the conclusion is faith, and not skepticism. Because it is possible for a man to see *something*, we do see through a glass darkly; it is quite dim, and we can see nothing beyond; yet I say, the legitimate conclusion is not skepticism, but faith. For, remember that although we do see darkly, we see. We see *something*. It is not a mere reflection; it is a reality behind the reflection. There are shadows, but there never is a shadow without something to cast a shadow. These are not illusions, though they be only dim representations; it is not a ghastly, it is not a godless universe that lies behind the mirror of our present existence. We see

something struggling beyond, dimly, it may be, but still struggling through present changes and trials; our poor troubled souls see something; it is not a blank; there are dim, strange images there, realities that they can not comprehend; but it is something; it is faith in the reality behind the shadow; it is faith in something that casts its image upon the mirror.

Dreams! says the skeptic; shadows that we live among, here to-day and gone to-morrow; nothing certain, all illusion! leaving us for a little while with the pleasing vision of hope, to break at last at the grave and leave nothingness. No, I reply, not dreams, not shadows; but realities, dimly apprehended, but none the less realities. Remember, it is we who see darkly, not that the things themselves are dark; we see darkly through the glass, not that the objects themselves are vague, blank, and nothingness. Suppose this were all a world of dreams; suppose this were all a world of shadows; suppose every object we grasp should prove to be but an allusion, still I ask, who are we who dream, who have this strange faculty of dreaming? Dreams reveal a man, they tell us. The general current of his dreams shows the general current of his nature and his character. And here is man, with glorious dreams. Dreams are they? Dreams were they that inspired the faithful believers of olden times, and led them on through conflict, through trial, through discipline to glory? Dreams were they that hovered before Paul in his dungeon

and before the sacramental host of God's elect, who led the early van of Christianity? Dreams were they that heroes, and martyrs, and holy men, and sainted mothers, and the noblest of the earth have had, all dreams? Then what kind of beings are we who can dream so gloriously, who can have such dreams? What faculty is it within us that creates the illusion of the dream? The brute does not dream in this way. He can perhaps have before him for a moment the hovering scenes of his day's action, of the little round of life in which he runs. But does he dream of heaven, of God, of Jesus Christ, of Infinite Love? It is only man that dreams so gloriously.

Ah, faith, I argue, is the only legitimate conclusion from the capacity of seeing at all. Even if I do see dimly here, I know there is something within by the very power and from the very power I have of conceiving something beyond and greater. The capacity of seeing at all leads me, I say, to the conclusion of faith, and not of skepticism. And then what are you going to do with these instincts of something higher and something better? For consider, not only is the external universe a mirror, though it be a dim one and a broken one of realities beyond; not only is the material universe such a mirror, but here within man there is a mirror, the mirror of these instincts of something higher and better; these instincts that have strangely prevailed in all ages of the world and in all souls, what do you make of them? are all these the

images of nothingness? How can we have the shadows without the substance, or have the forms of things mirrored before us that do not exist in reality?

And then the affections, the great working of man's love, there is the thing that the Apostle Paul fell back upon in this chapter. Man's love assures us that in this depth of nature in which God has planted within us there must be something higher and better. The noblest part of man, the affections, that have worked out the grandest results of time, what do we make of these? They are a revelation to us; for they are mirrors that show us something higher and better, and they will keep showing it. You can not darken them with skepticism, you can not cover them with the vail of materialism, you can not make God's dealings in the world to be so dark and inexplicable as that a mother's heart, a father's soul, or anybody that has loved, will not mirror something higher and better, showing a dim shadow on its surface.

I think there is great grandeur in the fact that Christianity has not made a full revelation of the things to come; I think there is a great deal of grandeur and originality in that idea. There is a reason for that in the discipline we need. Gradual growth must develop us and make us all that we should be; Christianity should not reveal everything to us. I have no faith in those revelations which pretend to show us the hidden world turned inside out so that we may read the names of the streets, see faces,

and touch hands—I do not believe it. We need not to see it. It is enough for us to be led up there gradually, and this is the reason why Christianity has not shown us the details of the future life, and flashed them upon our vision. But at the same time, as a religion of benevolence, Christianity would have informed us if these great primary instincts played us false. Jesus Christ would have told us if these affections of our nature prophesied untruly. A remarkable passage of the New Testament, in which Christ is speaking to his disciples, refers to this very point. “In my Father’s house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.” I think a great deal of what Christ did not tell us. He did not tell us there was a God. I hold that even the skeptic, even he who insists that Christ was nothing more than a good man, even he must conceive that Christ was not a benevolent being, if he left these primary instincts uncontradicted, they being false. Therefore I argue that as Christ has not told us they were false, they are true, and point to something higher and better.

Yes; we see darkly, but we do see. And in that fact there is an intimation; in the very condition of seeing, in the very faculty of seeing, there is proof that we shall see better face to face. Oh, desolate mourner, face to face shall you have recognition in heaven. But why need I raise that question for a single moment? You shall see, not face to face with these poor masks of clay, perhaps, subject to the mortal weakness

of our dim senses, but face to face in a deeper and more intimate realization than we can now even think of. Oh, you shall see and know those whom you have lost. In this deep fountain of affection is the proof that you shall see face to face, because, though dimly and darkly, you do see a little now. My friends, the inference from superstition is not skepticism, as some foolishly and in a most shallow manner argue. They go on and tell us many have had these distorted conceptions of the future life, and what do they infer? It is all a shadow, all nonsense—the priests' theory, the doctrines of the Bible, the sacred books of other nations, all are nonsense, all dreams. You might just as well tell me that all life is nonsense; you might just as well tell me that the pyramids of Egypt stand upon nothing; you might just as well tell me that the sure foundations of earth and heaven are shadows, as to tell me that this deep primal faith of the human heart in a God, in a future life, in essential and spiritual relations, that has moved the world as nothing else has or could, that has changed dynasties, that has altered epochs, that has been the prime motive power of all civilization—that all this stands upon nonsense—that all this primal faith is void and baseless—incongruous shadows, absurd shapes, gloomy ideas, to be sure, terrible to contemplate, but I infer from this not nothing, but something higher, better, and purer. Faith, and not skepticism, is the argument I draw from the vague suggestions, and forebodings, and images of even super-

stition itself. Men have seen darkly, but in all their prayers, in all their ceremonies, in all their strange dealings with the matters of God and the future life, they have seen something.

Once more I observe that even with this dim, imperfect mirror among men there are degrees of seeing. We all see darkly enough—the best of us, the clearest-sighted—but sometimes there is a film upon the eye of the observer as well as upon the mirror; there are imperfections there as well as in the object-glass. Sometimes men have their eyes darkened all over with the scales of appetite, so that all that they see is distorted, is made abominable. They see nothing in this mirror of the universe that does show us so many of the glories of God, so much that is beautiful, good, and true, though we see it darkly—they see nothing but shapes of beastliness and images of licentiousness. How terrible is the darkness of a man to whom life comes thus perverted through the camera of licentious appetite!

And sometimes men see nothing on the mirror of this life but a gigantic image of self. Like the giant of the Hartz Mountains, they see projected upon life merely an enlarged idea of their own wants and of their own greatness. They see very darkly indeed, who see nothing but that. It is natural that youth should have a limited vision. It is in the very nature of his being to need growth, beginning with little things and rising. The youth—perhaps it is a happy

thing—does not see or know that he sees darkly at all. Men apprehend that to some extent; but with the youth all is sunshine. He does not feel that he sees darkly; he only knows that he sees; he rejoices in the joy of the present sensation, and has no deeper thoughts, no deeper suggestions. This is a terrible thing when it becomes worldliness; then a man becomes a childish being, with nothing but a frivolous, superficial view of life; but this is an awful darkness for men to live in.

But there are men who apprehend the reality of existence, the reality of things which come darkly, and which cast their shadows, who still feel that there is a substance back of those shadows, and that there is something greater and grander outside this present existence.

But it is a momentous period in our being when a man awakes to a sense of realities. That is conversion; that is a change of heart; that is religion, to come to a sense that life is a reality, that there are spiritual realities beyond our present vision, which we touch, and are interlaced with us; to come to a sense that our souls are real, that God is real, that Christ is real, that eternity is real.

It is a great thing for a man—a momentous crisis in a man's life—when he comes to this point, when he comprehends the reality of these things. A great many do not believe in this reality. The profane man, the licentious man, the unchaste man, who blackens

his life by the practice of daily unclean living, he does not believe in divine laws until, by-and-by, they will crash upon him. Nations do not believe it sometimes; despotisms pile up their enormities, one after the other, until, by-and-by, there comes a grand crash of an earthquake shock, and they are gone; for all the despotism in this universe is a lie. So men are in darkness as to the realities of truth. They see the value of truth only as it pays, only as it is popular; and if it does not pay, they sacrifice it for that which does, for that which is popular, for that which is temporal, transient, and external.

Oh, it is a great thing to see a man devote himself to the contemplation of truth, even though it may be in one department of being. The man who does that, is truly regal. Such was the man who, a few days ago, was carried to his last resting-place in Berlin, with princes in his funeral train; a man who climbed the white, hoary summits amid eternal snow, and went into all the varied zones of the world; who looked abroad upon this earth's phenomena until they were all orb'd in a glorious cosmos in his mind. He was royal, far more royal, and has a brighter crown than will be won upon the blood-stained fields of Italy, in his simple love, and reverence, and realization of such a thing as truth.

But it is the greatest thing when men awake to the reality of such a thing as God and of spiritual things; seeing darkly, it is true, but discerning, as they look

more and more; the more steadily they behold, seeing the more clearly. Oh, my friends, that is really to live; to get hold of the realities of all spiritual existence, that is to live; all else is but the mere accessory of being.

We need not be unkind to past ages. Do you think that we, in the nineteenth century, with our telescopes and microscopes, are living more deeply and more essentially than men who lived three thousand years ago? No; not a bit. We are having more vehicles to carry out God's work, but we do not live any more than the old patriarchs, who sat at their tent-doors and communed with God, or than the old Chaldean shepherds, who felt this dim mystery among the hills. They lived just as much as we do; all the rest is fringe, vehicular, drapery, accessory. A man thinks that he can not really live, perhaps, when he is called in from his work and thrown into some narrow and limited condition of life. Yes, you can; heaven is there; God is there; spiritual existence is there; and when you get hold of such realities as these, no matter where you are. It is not breadth and variety, it is the intense realization of these great spiritual facts which gives us life. So has God given us the truth of life in one bright revelation that has flashed through this faint, dark mirror, in one clear ray, in Jesus Christ; here has He shown us His own face; He has given us one clear spot in this darkened glass through which we see His own face. We stumble often, we often fall;

but we do reconcile things, and we see the tendencies of things; and then we say, There is something beyond that we do not see.

Oh, To Come! the joy of those words, To Come! a something yet to be revealed! Not that all this present state is worthlessness; I say it is worth a great deal to live to day, and to see something, though it is darkly. It is worth a great deal. But oh, we do not see all. No; there is a higher and a better glory.

And, oh, man, clutching after shadows, living only in the darkness, making impalpabilities real—will you live on in such a way, thinking that realities are dreams, and dreams realities, or will you so follow the clew of light that streams through this darkened mirror, in Jesus Christ, that you may be continually living, and seeing brighter and clearer, and rising higher and higher, until you come to the blessed condition of that glorious communion where this mortal mirror is shattered, and we see face to face?

SHAMEFUL LIFE.

“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.”—GOS. ST. JOHN, viii. 10, 11.

IN taking these words for my text this evening, I do not raise the question as to the authenticity of the passage with which they are connected. Leaving this point to the critics, I shall make use of the verses as I find them in our English copy of the Gospel of St. John, satisfied with their internal expression of genuineness, and their accordance with the spirit of Christ. And I have selected this passage, because it contains a group of suggestions which have a special bearing upon the subject of the present discourse.

In the first place, it presents Jesus in contact with a shameful phase of human life; it reveals to us, as it were, the sad and sinful facts connected with this phase of life, as they are brought into relief in the pure light of his character and his truth.

In the next place, besides the one specially accused and marked out, it shows us the relation of others to this shameful phase of human life—the men who, con-

victed by their own consciences, dare not cast the first stone, but went out one by one.

In the third place, it exhibits Christ's treatment of guilt: "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more."

The bearing of these three points upon the subject of shameful life, is, I think, sufficiently evident.

I. In accordance, then, with the order of thought just suggested; I shall proceed in the first place to speak of the fact of shameful life itself. In a remarkable work of fiction, published some years since, two of the personages in the story are represented as entering the palace of Eblis, the halls of fate and of the dead; and there, amid a profusion of splendors, rows of columns, rich perfumes, stately banquets, vases of crystal, dances and music, they observed a multitude traversing the boundless galleries, each with his right hand upon his heart, all in silence; while over the vast grandeur of the scene there hung a shadow of lowering gloom. It seems to me that this description not inaptly symbolizes our civilization. In the midst of the great city, with all its grandeur and its luxury, its glitter of life and show of social refinement, there hangs the dark shadow of one prevailing sin, the presence of which every one knows and feels, but of which no one dare speak; even though to thousands the guilt and the anguish are as close as the fiery torment burning in those hearts which the spectral crowd pressed with their right hands, as they moved through the halls of Eblis. An evil so widespread, so vital, that even were he independent of those

common relations in the social organism of which I spoke of the other evening, no man is unaffected by it. And yet we shrink from the discussion of it. We throw over it a veil of decent silence. We deprecate the contamination of the statement, while we suffer the curse of the fact. We withhold it from our public speech, while it touches the core of our common life; we huddle it aside in the field of Christian effort and moral reform, when all the while it jostles us in the streets, sends its taint into our houses, withers our very holiest sanctities, presses upon our dearest interests; saps the foundation and poisons the springs of society. So we must put our hands upon our hearts and move through the overhanging shadow, saying nothing about it. Even I, here to-night, speaking of it, as speak of it I must, must speak of it by circumlocution—referring to it as something understood, but not to be distinctly expressed. And yet, I ask again, what social evil touches us more nearly, or should more strenuously urge us to earnest discussion and uncompromising effort?

Yes, many are the accusers—not Scribes and Pharisees merely—who brand this phase of human life as a sin and a shame. It is an *ancient* shame; old as the records of the race; coeval with the earliest corruption of the human heart; making still more fearful the most savage forms of society; stalking, in its painted abomination, amid the most splendid refinements of the world; mingling its polluted stream with the foremost tides of civilization; marching with armies; moving with colonies; masking itself with art, with literature,

with wit, with philosophy, with religion even ; as sure to be found in every great city as crime or death ; nestling at the heart of the ripest luxury, like rottenness at the core of fruit.

And, as in the passage of Scripture before us, so everywhere, it is woman who stands in the foreground of this shame. It is upon her that the malediction and the condemnation fall. It is to her that the accusers point, not caring to ask whether they themselves are clear of the guilt. Most prominently, most mournfully is she the victim ; sinned against or sinning.

Is there anything more solemn—is there anything more sad—going on under the heaven, than this painted masquerade of frivolity and death—this carnival of abomination—this sacrifice of lives and souls ? Brief is the career, sudden the destruction, awful the retribution, that move on swiftly to this chorus of profaneness and laughter, that perpetually alternate in the “house, that is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” Consider, for a moment, this army of six thousand women, whose are the symbols of shameful life ; so many of them mere children—the majority of them accomplishing their guilty career and dying, on the very threshold of existence ! Homes somewhere they have had—many of them homes of purity and sanctity ; hopes were born with them, that have withered in their perdition ; hearts have been broken at their shame ; and while they have whirled through life in that guilty revelry, honored heads have grown gray because of them, and gone down with sorrow to the grave.

Think of the crushed possibilities—the desecrated laws of soul and nature—the fine gold of womanhood that God casts in the mould of His most perfect work, tarnished and grown dim. Think of the incarnated suffering, the painted and bejeweled woe ; the masked ghastliness in the midst of this guilty revelry, like the death's heads at Egyptian feasts, all wreathed with flowers. Yes, look upon it as we may, it is an army of *victims* that swell this long retinue of Shameful Life. Not that it is *undeserved* shame. The symbols of disgrace are fitted to the sin, and she who stumbles in that guilty, even though it may be an erring path, is reaping the fruit of her own doings, and suffers in part, as she *ought* to suffer, by the protest of instinctive virtue, which erases her name from the list of respectability, and points her out as degraded. And yet, I say, none the less is she a *victim*; one who, even while marked, is to be mourned over ; pitied even in her most shameless defiance—nay, pitied all the more. Not merely for herself should we be lifted above all light, profligate scorn—all prudish horror and Pharasaical contempt—in the treatment of this subject ; but for the humanity that in her is stained and perverted—for the type of pure womanhood that lies disheveled and cast down, under the light of Heaven and before God.

But we can have little sympathy for humanity in the abstract, unless at the same time we realize it as a compound of personalities. The shame, the suffering affects humanity in the abstract, only by affecting individual units in that humanity. In that crowd of guilty women, each has her own story to tell ; a story

which, in its elements of actual facts, outdoes all romance ; lends an interest even to the monotony and commonplace of hardened wickedness, and paints the coarse canvas of vice with the terrible frescoes of hell. The deepest romance of human life is not in the train of circumstances that may be interwoven with the career of a human being, but in the human being who lives and acts in that career. The history of a soul sheathed in flesh, and weaving its destiny in actual life, *that's* the deepest romance. At any time, and everywhere, could the most commonplace man whom you meet on the sidewalk turn his inward life to the daylight, and were he endowed with the faculty of expression, so that he could make a revelation of all he has thought, and suffered, and rejoiced in, failed in, and achieved ; it would need little of the charm of outward scenery to make that revelation *romantic*. So I say, that without any fictitious covering, or glare of false sentiment, the individual history of each of these perishing ones is a terrible romance ; nay, more than this—it is a terrible *reality*.

Though never the light of a happy home shone around her ; though there was never any gentle nurturing for her infancy ; though no prayers were sent before her into life as heralds and as blessings, yet is not this fact in itself most pitiful, most terrible ? Most pitiful, most terrible, that here is not only a degraded womanhood but a degraded childhood—a young spirit fallen into the world as a snow-flake falls into the mire and pollution of the streets ; surrounded from the first with the basest elements, mixed with blasphemy

and familiar with sin, branded and doomed to iniquity at birth, cradled in a sarcophagus and swathed in the cerements of moral death ! This much of dreadful pathos, at least, is unfolded by the coarsest, the commonest Life of Shame. It is a sad, sad thought, that some were born so low, so debased, that they have never been able to *fall*.

But to many it has indeed been a fall, as awful, if it were truly realized, in its descent from womanly purity, as the fall of a star from its sphere. It may be easy for a human being to forget the lower estate in rising to a higher, but it may be doubted whether even in the profoundest degradation we can ever utterly forget the condition from which we have lapsed. Let us indeed be thankful that remorse can never entirely abandon the human soul, nor the visions of banished innocence fail to linger upon its horizon. And this fitful remorse, these visions of canceled purity, accompany the poor lost girl in *her* descending career, and help make up the inward scenery that shifts and mingles with those outward gradations of sin and shame—gradations ever darker, ever more foul ; the external ever becoming more and more typical and expressive of the internal. In those early stages of the career, where sin simmers in etiquette and the death's head wears a veil of decency ; where gray-haired dotards make offerings of wealth, and the snares of youth are glittering with gold ; amid the sumptuous accompaniments, the refined revelries, the flashing lights ; there is an incongruity between that "souls' tragedy" and the gay welcome into the world of the lost ; between the sacrifice and the

surroundings ; the shambles of hell framed in silver, and set with diamonds ; an incongruity that may become an illusion and cheat the sense of shame. But, as with rapid descent the steps go downward, ever among baser forms and harsher realities ; as the splendid tapestry of conventionality fades, and grows mouldy, and drops away ; the handwriting comes out fearfully visible on the wall—God's violated Law of Purity makes known its awful vindications ; and the fallen soul discovers in its outward conditions the reflected shapes and shadows of itself. On that pallet of straw, in that damp, dark cellar reeking with the miasma of debauchery and death, and ringing with curses, the dying woman lies. O dishonored workmanship of the merciful God ! O moaning wreck of humanity and womanhood ! to whose dying ear the voices of memory come, as to the drowning come the sound of far-off Sabbath bells ; before whose glazing eyes unmoving hangs that mother's look of broken-hearted woe, that father's face of ruined hope and pride—O thou ! now to put aside the garment of mortality as thou didst the garment of innocence and truth, surely here is no deceit of sin, no palliating allurements of infamy.

No, I do not palliate this evil ; I do not hide the guilt which asserts itself so terribly ; I only intensify the horror of this shameful phase of life, when I ask you to consider, faithfully and mournfully, the woe which it brings to the lost woman herself—the dreadful condition of a soul sealed up with this iniquity, and perishing even while it seeks to allure. Young, short-lived, quickly swept from the glitter into the gloom, while new

ranks of the tempted and the fallen step in to take their places, see how the iniquity they serve serves them ! Agents of moral desolation, who carry the arrows of retribution in their own hearts ! The painted symbols of punished guilt ! A wretched multitude, whose procession of impudent bravery, or careless laughter, is really a masked funeral ! Corybantes of death and sin, themselves the *victims* of death and sin !

But if the suffering of those who appear most prominent in this phase of Shameful Life, furnishes no reason for calling before us the huge, dark fact, then are we incited to do so by considering the perils of the young and the innocent ; by considering the injury which acts upon all. The silence and apathy which exist in regard to this evil, are not justified by any motives of delicacy or dread. The evil is in having a social cancer, not in *talking* about a cancer. The only possibility of curing or limiting a wrong is to become clearly conscious of the wrong. "We have no right," says one of the able women of our day, "we have no right to shrink, with sanctimonious, ultra delicacy, from the barest mention of things we must know to exist. If we do not know it, our ignorance is at once both helpless and dangerous, narrows our judgment, exposes us to a thousand painful mistakes, and greatly limits our powers of usefulness."* To prevent all talk upon this subject, there is on the one side a morbid, sensitive delicacy, that, after all, is more closely allied to a base consciousness than a genuine virtue ; and, on the other hand, there is a frivolous spirit of worldliness exhibited by men, who, on mention of this class

* "A Woman's Thoughts about Women."

of facts, find only occasion for a jest, or sneeringly insinuate that the reformer, the philanthropist, or the clergyman who even so much as alludes to this shame, knows more of such things than he ought. At least there is a prevailing indifference, or unconsciousness of danger, that cries out, "Don't disturb this matter ! don't talk about it in public—especially not in the pulpit—let it rest as something that cannot be helped, or at least as something *we* have nothing to do with." Is it so—that innocent lives are in no danger ? Are respectable homes safe from all harm ? Is there a civil plague that graciously limits itself to a defined orbit, and troubles none who go not where it is ? Is there a swamp of moral pollution, whose foul vapors never spread—whose influence is never felt in the common air ?

We must have a quarantine for pestilence, and put it as far off as we can. We break laws and burn down buildings if it comes too near. If another State refuses us the tip end of a sand-bank, we will build up a platform from the sea bottom ; we will put it afar off, and isolate it, so that the miasma may wither in the salt air, before it reaches us ; so that ridges of great gray waves shall fence it in, and keep us safe. But a moral evil, a social sin, that glides with sails of Tyrian purple down Broadway ; that sets its pit-falls for innocence, and its death-snares for youth at our very feet ; that oozes with its damnation through brick walls and stone fronts, from the Five Points to the Fifth Avenue ; that saps the city with corruption ; that makes a thousand desolate homes ; that breaks the hearts of good, true women, and fills their eyes with tears ; that with its presence

desecrates our holiest places ; oh ! *this* we must not speak about ; we must let it all alone !

So, then, it is a *safe* danger, is it ? Safe ! who is safe ? Safe in your own respectability, O father ? Are you safe while this temptation waits for your sons ? Safe in your own honor, O mother ? Shall there never more be broken-hearted mothers, weeping for their daughters' shame ? Safe, O citizen ! with this many-headed fountain of poverty, taxation and crime ? Preach to the heathen, cry out against cannibalism, and overturn Moloch ? but these jungles where the insnarer prowls, " hunting for the precious life ; " these shambles where souls are destroyed ; this devil-worship, where even parents sacrifice their children ; oh ! as to all that, put your hands on your hearts, and walk about in the lowering gloom in mysterious silence !

This is neither noble delicacy, Christian duty, nor common sense. No ! bring into open view the shame, even as the guilty woman in the text was brought forth—let it be accused and marked—let the full light of Christ's truth and purity stream upon it.

II. But, having considered this phase of Shameful Life, let us proceed, in the second place, to consider the relation to it of those who are not *personally* involved with it. In the passage connected with the text, it is said that the Saviour lifted himself up and replied to the accusers, " He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. . . . And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out, one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the

last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." These accusers felt that, in some way, they were related to the woman's guilt. Not by that special sin, it may be, but by *some* sin. This great unutterable guilt—who is not, in some way, allied with it by the fact of sinfulness in general—by the consciousness of moral weakness, that should, at least, make us merciful? But I ask, in the next place, how many are conscious of this special guilt? In the matter of which I am now treating, the *woman* is the conspicuous sinner. Upon *her* falls the blight of the public shame. I ask not now, is this merciful? I ask, is this just? People think that the passage from which I have taken the text is a great lesson of charity; and so it is. But it is a great lesson of *justice* also. There was the severest justice in Christ's verdict: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." There was no place there for quibbling lawyers and interested jurors. He who presided in that serene Chancery of divine truth and wisdom held a just balance, and distributed equity. Charity! mercy! It was, surely, the most strict and sublime administration of justice ever recorded. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." But I ask, what *justice* is there in our modern custom, that scarcely frowns at the guilty man—sometimes laughs at and even patronizes him—and pours all the vials of wrath and condemnation on the guilty woman—*her* guilt itself often the result of his falsehood and his meanness. What justice, what honor, what delicacy, O refined woman! who, recoiling with virtuous scorn from that fallen sister, will welcome with brilliant

homage him by whom she fell. I suppose the mantle of Christian charity should cover everybody. But, perhaps, we ought to allow for a little natural shrinkage ; and if there is anybody that it won't cover, and that ought to have the privilege of lying outside the hem of it, in the cold blast and the biting frost, it is that man who trades in woman's affection—who drags her down to ruin—who leaves her to suffer the guilt—who goes on, smiling, to new conquests, and boasts of his victory. Smooth, smiling, flattered, honored, welcomed in refined society, entertained in respectable homes—when his only use in the world seems to be to make men believe in a devil, or rather to feel that any particular devil is unnecessary.

There are those who tell us that this evil of Shameful Life is a necessary evil—that it may be regulated, that it may be limited, but that it can never be eradicated—that this deep, awful cancer society must bear forever in its bosom, doing the best we can with it. This may be so, and it may not be so. But one thing I insist upon—that the shame shall be divided ; that the guilt shall be distributed, and fall wherever it belongs ; and that the sinning man shall be branded as distinctly with public scorn as is the sinning woman. Suppose every man who is guilty bore its conspicuous mark as he went down Broadway. I ask, upon whom would the brand of direct guilt fall ? Upon many who are *accusers* as well as on the accused ! Nay, I think that, in some respects, *communities* may stand like individuals in relation to this evil. The position of our own city—of the city of New York—is not unlike that

of the woman in this passage of Scripture before us. Guilty, unquestionably, and certainly most vehemently accused. But who are the accusers? Why, those who share its guilt. Men who come from other communities, and who, sojourning here for a time, add to the catalogue of its abominations, swell the flood of its shame, and then go back to the pure and peaceful country to join in a chorus of horror and indignation at "the exceeding sinfulness of New York!" New York itself is bad enough certainly—not so dark, I believe though, as she has been painted—bad enough; but let that community that is without sin—let that community that is without participation in the sin of New York—let that community first cast a stone.

They "went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last," "being convicted by their own conscience." Yes, conscience, if nothing else, convicts the *aged* of participation in this guilt of Shameful Life. It is most awful to contemplate—a profligate old man; without even a sinful excuse for his corruption. It may be said of the sins of the young, that they are striking out; but his have all struck *in*, and he himself has become sin incarnate; forfeiting the mercy that might be extended to youth, and the respect that is due to age. Very likely he is the father of a family, and by his baseness the principles of his own sons are undermined, and the air his daughters breathe is tainted. With his gray hairs, and the wicked flame that kindles in his old eyes, serving no better purpose than that of a moral lighthouse, to warn others, as he stands upon the crumbling verge of his own grave; to show them where

the shoals of vice are, and where lie the bones of its victims.

And *youth* ; oh ! *here* is the fearful way by which it descends into the chambers of death, and becomes initiated into the mysteries of sin. Vain attempt to paint a picture which needs not to be painted ; so terribly is every lineament of it drawn in thousands of faces, in hundreds of homes, in ruined character, in wrecked honor, in diseased manhood, in wasted capacities, in parental hopes wrecked and trampled—in beautiful life recklessly thrown away—in strength and possibility turned into loathsome leprosy, and reeling into untimely graves. So comes the experience of the old Fact that has slain its tens of thousands. So stumble the new generations, where generations past have fallen, into the snare of Shameful Life. So does the young man of to-day verify the description written ages ago : “ He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks ; till a dart strike through his liver ; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life ; ” while “ her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. ” Pause, oh ! thou who art yielding to the tempter, and hear the words of old Wisdom ; of divine, inexorable Truth : “ Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. ”

But too little time is left us to consider another class

of relations which may bear to the evil to which I am now alluding. I mean *indirect* relations to this guilt of Shameful Life. In various ways, by numerous actions, opinions, neglects, the best and purest among us may be thus implicated. There is not scope enough left at the present for me to enter upon a catalogue of *causes*: They are numerous. But in order that I may illustrate the *indirect relations* which respectable men and honorable women may bear to this "greatest of our social evils," I observe that one cause of this prevailing shame is *want*—positive and imperative *want*. Upon this point the testimony is too grave—the sources of proof are too numerous to be impeached. In the great host of the abandoned, there are hundreds, yes, thousands, who have struggled to the last thread of subsistence before yielding to temptation. And how awful—how torturing that struggle, *their* lips alone can tell. Perhaps some of you have read the account which Mr. Mayhew has given of a congregation of needle-women and slop workers who were gathered one evening, in the city of London, telling him their sad stories—unfolding that romance of real life, to which I alluded a little while ago. "Never," says he, "in all history, was such a sight seen, or such tales heard. Here, in the dim haze of the large bare room in which they met, sat women and girls, . . . in rags, and even those borrowed, in order that they might come and tell their misery to the world. I have witnessed many a scene of sorrow lately," says Mr. Mayhew; "I have heard stories that unmanned me; but never, till last Wednesday, had I heard or seen anything so solemn, so terrible as this."

And what was the burden of that solemn, that fearfully eloquent testimony, breaking from the lips of these poor needle-women? It was to this effect, that a large number of the trade—probably one-fourth of the whole, or one-half of those who had no husbands or parents to support them—resorted to the streets to eke out a living.”

But London is a great way off—not outside of our common humanity, to be sure—yet let us hear a mournful voice from a victim of Shameful Life, here in our own city. “It was absolute want that drove me to this life,” she says. “My sister, who was about three years older than I am, lived with me. She was deformed, and a cripple from a fall she had while a child, and could not do any hard work. She could do a little sewing, and when we were both able to get work, we could just get a living. When the heavy snow-storm came our work stopped, and we were in want of food and coals. One very cold morning, just after I had been to the store, the landlord’s agent called for the rent we owed, and told us if we could not pay it we should have to move.” Then comes the story of the terrible temptation—a temptation for the moment resisted and balked. But, she goes on to say, “when I got home and saw my sister so sick as she was, and wanting many little things that we had no money to buy, my heart almost broke.” And it was with that almost broken heart, pouring out the ointment of a self-sacrificing love, that she fell. Against the pleadings of that sister, against the resistance of human nature and womanly nature—against all—crushed,

broken-hearted, she fell ! *Another* heart was broken ! The sick, crippled sister, lived only a few weeks in the agony of that great shame. "And," adds the poor, lost girl, as the summing up of the story, "I do not like this life. I would do almost anything to get out of it ; but, *now that I have once done wrong*, I can't get any one to give me work, and I must stop here, unless I wish to be starved to death."* And this is an evil that must be covered up and smoothed over with decent devices ! Indelicate ! Is it indelicate to starve—indelicate to die—indelicate to remind you of your responsibilities ? We are connected with this matter very closely by our opinions concerning woman's sphere of work. There are those who immediately associate this idea of an extended sphere for female work with "strong-minded women," and with "woman's rights," or some other subject of cant or sarcasm. In this lies one great cause of this phase of social evil.

If we could create a wider sphere of employment for woman, it would, no doubt, rectify a large amount of this evil—not all, by any means—but more than we may suppose. And woman must have better wages. Out of two thousand women who work for their daily bread, 534 receive \$1 per week, 336 receive \$2 per week.* Sure this is a comfortable equipment with which to keep off death and conquer the devil ! How many of *you* would do it ? One woman had to do it by making caps *at two cents apiece* ! What a beautiful

* See Sanger on Prostitution.

halo shines around such an employer—his path of charity paved with penny pieces! I wonder if this munificent benefactor of the human race would be willing to show himself. I should think, in the light of such a revelation, he would need all the caps the woman ever made to cover his own head, and hide *his humble sense of merit!*

But some may still ask, “What have *we* to do with this matter?” We have, first and foremost, to rectify our opinions concerning woman’s sphere of employment. A great many women—honorable, respectable women—have much to do with this evil, by the manner in which they deal with poor women who, directly or indirectly, work for them; pure and honorable women, who glory in “buying *cheap*.” They may look to themselves for much of the misery consequent upon such destitution as results to these ill-paid sisters. When they dress themselves, they may think whether they have not helped to dress a soul for sacrifice, or, to borrow Hood’s simile, “to sew a thread in a shroud.” “Or, to use the language of the great master of modern English eloquence—“If, for a moment, the spirits of Truth and Terror, which walk invisibly among the masks of the earth, would lift the dimness from our erring thoughts, and show us how ‘many’ have literally entered into partnership with Death, and dressed themselves in his spoils! Yes, if the veil could be lifted not only from your thoughts, but from your human sight, you would see—the angels do see—on those gay white dresses of yours strange dark spots, and crimson pattern that you knew not of—spots of the inextinguish-

able red that all the seas cannot wash away ; yes, and among the pleasant flowers that crown your fair heads, and glow in your wreathed hair, you would see that one weed was always twisted which no one thought of—the grass that grows on graves.”*

I might go on and illustrate many other ways in which those who have no personal participation in Shameful Life, have some relation with its sin and its suffering. I might dwell, for instance, upon some customs and opinions that are prevalent respecting marriage and married life. But what has been said, if well pondered, may suffice for the present.

III. There is another point relating to this evil of shameful life, which the text brings before us, but I can only allude to it in closing. “Hath no man condemned thee?” said Jesus to the woman. “She said, ‘No man, Lord ;’ and Jesus said unto her, ‘Neither do I condemn thee ; go and sin no more.’” Now, this portion of the text opens the question of remedying or preventing this sin ; the question of Christian treatment. In fact it opens two points. It brings up the question of getting rid of the sin itself. This is the first idea in all Christian treatment—to get rid of the sin ; not to palliate, not to pardon and excuse it, but to get rid of it. The great question is, how shall we get rid of it ? This is a question I am not able to answer. It is one that the most thoughtful men have not been able to answer. Some maintain that we never can get rid of

* Ruskin—Political Economy of Art.

it. It is hard to think so ; and surely this is not a conclusion to be passively acquiesced in. We are bound to do our best to eradicate it ; to discharge at least all our duty in this respect. It clearly points out one thing : our obligation of personal purity, of individual virtue and principle. "Society" is an abstraction ; it is composed of you and me ; it is the aggregate of the individuals in it. We need Christian education, Christian sentiment, entering into all the sanctities of life, making pure and sacred this body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost ; this immortal soul which God has breathed into our humanity.

The other point of treatment opened in the text is that of *mercy* ; giving a chance to those who have sinned, for *repentance* and *reformation*. There is no weak sentiment taught in the text ; no indiscriminate tenderness. The evil of the sin was left unrelieved—the intrinsic consequences remained. But, more than this—we must remember that Christ saw the woman's heart ; saw not only the tears in her eyes, but the penitence in her soul. But *this* was given ; Christ gave the woman a chance to go and sin no more, and to recover the standard of virtue. This is what society should do now ; for if God pardons, who shall refuse ? If God takes up these poor, abandoned ones, who shall reject them ? Yet this is just what we do. Society makes a Dante's hell of that state of Shameful Life ; closes its doors, and inscribes over them, "*No hope.*" Consider the words of that poor girl, "Now, I have once done wrong, I can't get any one to give me work, and I must either stay here or starve." Have we any

right to do this, and to establish such an inexorable barrier against all return ?

But some may say “ unless this is so, we shall encourage sin ; we shall make repentance easy ? ” There is a great deal of nonsense in all this sort of talk. Is it encouraging sin to encourage repentance ? Is genuine repentance ever easy ? and does it encourage sin to open a way of repentance, and to say to the guilty that there is a possibility of usefulness and hope ? He who says so knows very little of human nature. After all there is nothing we talk so much about, but I am afraid there is nothing less practically known than the large deep charity of Christ.

Look at that instance in Cincinnati ! When the poor girl had ended her career of shame, they wouldn't let her rest in her grave—as though the taint of her sin had canceled God's workmanship in her body, and ostracized her very bones. And when at last they attempted to bury her, they could find no minister of the merciful Jesus who was willing to breathe a prayer over the fallen woman's remains. At length they found one (and I suppose some would charitably attribute this to “ the laxity of his views ”), willing to render these last offices to humanity, and at length the harlot's bones were permitted to mingle with their kindred dust.

I make no personal application ; but I can't help thinking we do not yet comprehend the full meaning of these words—“ Ye Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites—the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.” Oh ! the Christian idea

is to seek and to save the lost. Some one may suggest that those whom we may win from this terrible life will be but a drop to the ocean. Perhaps so ; but at least every drop is a *soul*. At any rate, who are we who sit in judgment ? who is there, if he will fathom his own heart, who does not sin, according to his condition—sin in his own way—as deeply as many a fallen woman sins ? Mercy is *justice* in this case ; we should allow all an opportunity to repent, and not block the way to repentance. Christ has proposed the true test —“ Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone.” Nobody can do that. But the Saviour interposes with his more excellent way—the way of divine charity—the way of hope—the way of new life. Now, as then, he says—and in saying it he requires the response of all Christian hands and hearts—now, as then, he says to every broken-hearted, tearful, penitent Magdalene—“ Go, and sin no more.”

THOMAS: THE SKEPTIC.

... "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."—JOHN xx. 25.

BUT little is said in the New Testament respecting Thomas or Didymus. We have no account of his parentage, occupation, or place of birth; though it is supposed that he was a native of Galilee. He was chosen one of the twelve, and appears prominently two or three times in the course of the narrative. His career, after the close of Christ's personal ministry, appears to be involved with the uncertainties of tradition. He is mentioned by Origen, Jerome, and other writers, and is said to have bent his steps to the remote East—to India, and even to the borders of China. But the word "*India*" is used vaguely in ancient authors, and may mean Ethiopia. It is said, also, that having visited some of the islands in the India Ocean, he returned to the shores of the Ganges, and that after many labors of conversion and of miracle, he was attacked by certain Brahmins, in a secluded place whither he had retired for the purpose of devotion, and shot to death with arrows. These and other tradi-

tions are probably more or less true ; but no doubt he did his work among the other apostles, and accomplished the mission for which he was chosen, and it is not incredible that, as has been conjectured, the traces of his labors are yet to be seen.

But whatever may have been the personal history of Thomas, his character, by a few artless strokes, stands out distinct and peculiar upon the page of the evangelist. We see a hesitating and matter-of-fact mind, in remarkable contrast to the confiding spirit of John, and the zeal of Peter. He was evidently possessed of courage, rectitude, and affection. When Jesus declared his intention of visiting Judea, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his disciples, Thomas exclaimed—“Let us also go, that we may die with him.” But even in this instance, perhaps his personal devotion to his master was crossed by doubts respecting his wisdom and his power. At the last Supper we have another evidence of the literal and material quality of his mind. He interprets Christ’s reference to the immortal world and to his own death, as an earthly and local allusion ; and says—“Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way ?” But the most vivid expression of his character appears just after the resurrection, and in the instance connected with the text. We are told that upon our Saviour’s first appearance to his disciples, Thomas was absent. And his natural disposition breaks out even in this fact. By him especially Christ’s kingdom and reign were anticipated as material and temporal facts. But when he saw One who, as he daily expected, would confound the unbelief

of the world by the splendor of some signal manifestation, bound, condemned, crucified, sealed up in the sepulchre, to his conception there was an end of the matter. And so utterly foreign to his cast of mind was the idea of any grander result, that, it is probable, he went about his business. Even the vagueness of hope, and the lingerings of fond expectation, were with him forbidden by the grave. And, therefore, he was not with the disciples when the newly risen Lord so suddenly broke upon them. Therefore, with a sturdy and vehement incredulity, he cried out—"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Yet the meekness and patience of Jesus condescended to grant even this evidence, and as the apostle's stubborn doubt was swept away by gushes of wonder and of reverence, he mingles the gentle rebuke—"Be not faithless, but believing."

I have already said, that I do not select these characters in the Gospels as illustrating in every instance characters at the present day. We should not forget that the unbelief of Thomas was only temporary; we should not forget his conversion, and that he retained the place to which his Master called him, and, as we may believe, subsequent faithfulness. Still, from what is exhibited of him in the New Testament, and especially in his position in the text, I think we do him no injustice in taking him as a representative of the general character of the *skeptic*.

And, in entering upon the theme thus indicated, it becomes me to say that I cannot even touch, much less

discuss, all the topics which pertain to it. Such a work would of itself require a series of discourses. Nor shall I use the term "*skeptic*" in its strict sense. Philosophical or absolute skepticism is very rare. It can only be held by men who have profoundly studied and subtilely analyzed the phenomena of psychology and of being, and therefore is not likely to prevail much among the realities of the every-day world. In this philosophical form, the skeptic denies, or rather considers as untrustworthy, everything—both conclusions and premises, the thing that is perceived and the subject that perceives it. He caricatures metaphysics. He thrives upon the contentions, the sophisms, the defective logic and mutable opinions of other men. He pits warring systems against one another, and sets them to tearing out each other's vitals. He accepts the process of the Idealist who denies the existence of matter, and of the Sensationalist who denies the existence of mind. Between these he pretends to hang balanced. As men do not agree, he concludes there can be no standard of agreement; forgetting that they really do agree in much more than they differ. As one refutes the other, he doubts whether there is any absolute truth, not noticing the common basis upon which both rest their appeals. He points to the dark segments of mystery that interrupt the sphere of knowledge, and so maintains that we know nothing—not making the distinction between incompleteness and delusion. "So," says he, "we can neither believe nor disbelieve, affirm nor deny."

As a play of the intellect, this kind of skepticism

may have its place. It may do very well as a satire upon metaphysics. Nay, perhaps it is something more than a satire, and fitly expresses the futility of those inquiries and distinctions which under this name—"metaphysics"—have occupied so many minds from Aristotle until now. But, whatever may be its position, it is refuted by simple common sense. The skeptic himself refutes it in the very process by which he endeavors to justify it. He reasons while shaking the whole fabric of reason. He eats, though he cannot prove that bread, which nourished him yesterday, will nourish him to-day. He commits himself to slumber, though it is impossible to demonstrate that the bed is more substantial than his dreams.

This kind of skepticism, moreover, is not necessarily connected with disbelief in religion. Hume, it is true, was a philosophical skeptic, but so was Pascal. Indeed, this ground has sometimes been resorted to as a fortress for religion. Men have labored to unsettle all the *natural* foundations of knowledge in order to exalt the value of a *supernatural* revelation.

But I refer particularly, at this time, to what commonly passes under the name of skepticism, though it might, perhaps more justly, be termed unbelief. It is, at least, a position of doubt as to spiritual and religious truths—as to revelation, and the higher propositions of natural theology. And I would say, in the first place, that there is such a thing as an honest skepticism. There may be an inborn proclivity, a defect in reasoning, or really a lack of proper evidence. Yet, in such a case, we must suppose an earnest desire to know

the truth, and a steadfast endeavor to find it. Let me say, moreover, that, to a certain degree, skepticism is a duty. The prerogative of reason obligates me to deliberate between propositions. One of the grandest faculties we possess is the power of extricating truth, and he who evinces an open-mouthed credulity, is not only weak but false—false to the highest endowments and privileges of his manhood. In proportion to the magnitude of a subject, also, there is wisdom in avoiding precipitate conclusions—in turning a matter around and letting the light stream full upon every angle of it. Perhaps it is well too, as a general thing, for a man to keep aloof from systems. It is a great evil in the world, that as soon as we receive truth, we are prone to let it crystallize. We must frame it into a creed, and measure it with a ritual. Our minds get imbedded in it, so as to close up the avenues of fresh communication and render it difficult to shift our position to higher and broader ground. Let us not be too ready to separate our truth from the fluent mass that perpetually undulates toward us. Let us not petrify our fragment and make it the nucleus of a party. Let us not settle down upon it, and hedge it in, as though it were the whole. The revelation of God, and of the universe, is not yet sealed. More is to break forth from Christianity than is now comprehended in any sect. And every man should be so much of a skeptic as always to stand in an attitude of inquiry and reception. Nay, there are instances when skepticism betrays more genuine religious life than a formal profession. The man who strives to reach the core of things, who anxiously

wrestles with doubt and clasps his temporary conviction though it makes his very heart bleed, and yet who beats about in blinding mist and "cannot see, may be nearer the kingdom of heaven than he who mechanically wears the yoke of tradition, who worships in listless conformity, but who cares nothing for the truth in itself, and in whose soul that truth lies dead.

But all this is very different from the kind of skepticism to which I refer, and which appears in various phases. Sometimes, it exists as a cavilling spirit, and contents itself with proposing objections and springing sharp dilemmas. Sometimes it is covered by a hollow-hearted orthodoxy. Sometimes it is merely the instrument of youth and recklessness at a period when there is a craving after novelty and notoriety, and a chivalric delight in assaulting opinions that the majority hold sacred. There is a class of men, too, who are fond of singularity. They are teased and wearied by popular enthusiasm upon any subject, and if the mass should turn skeptics they would be quite likely to come out stanch believers. There are also moral grounds of skepticism—a pride of intellect, a dislike of religious restraint and discipline. But, in any instance, I allude to skepticism when held not as a wise precaution or a transition state of the mind, but as a theory in which passion and interest are enlisted—which is to be defended whatever may offer—and which is not so much true skepticism as systematic and desperate unbelief.

And, in this light, I would remark especially upon the *unfairness* of the skeptic. This may be illustrated by the objections which he commonly urges against the

New Testament. Now even if its claims to special inspiration be disposed of, still the Gospel remains professedly a record of actual events, and as such it is entitled to the treatment which is applied to any other history. But no book has been so disingenuously handled—so stretched and racked by criticism. It has undergone a microscopic scrutiny. It has been dissected word by word. And every apparent discrepancy has been paraded as a triumphant refutation of its authenticity. Thus, it is found that Matthew describes the healing of a leper as having taken place *before* Christ entered Capernaum, while Mark and Luke represent it as occurring *after* he left that city. One evangelist mentions *one* Gadarene demoniac, and another *two*. One says that the women came to the sepulchre while it was yet *dark*; another, that they came at *dawn*, and yet another says at *sunrise*. But even if these statements could not be reconciled, does it follow that the events to which they relate did not take place? Is this a fair rule? One which would be legitimate in its application to any other circumstances? Do we acknowledge it as such in the transactions of every-day life? On the contrary, it is felt that diversity of evidence as to the *incidentals* of a fact, so far from proving the fact untrue, increases its probability. Smooth, rounded stories, each tallying with the other in every particular, present an aspect of fabrication. To the lookers-on, any transaction always shows different phases, and their variation upon different points only proves their independence. In this respect, therefore, the narratives in the Gospels wear the freshness

of reality. Applying a fair test, we should say, that the evidence of one man, to the effect that a certain event took place at one hour, and the testimony of another to the effect that it took place at a later period, is surely no proof that the essential fact involved in both affirmations did not take place at all. On the contrary, it is strong demonstration that the fact did occur. Therefore, I repeat, it is unfair, for the skeptic to deny the same test in the case of the healing of the leper, or of the resurrection, which he allows in other transactions. I do not say that he should not require *stronger* evidence in the case of a miracle, but that he should not repudiate it because of that *diversity* of testimony, which in any other instance would be accepted as an additional proof. Let him stretch any other history upon the same rack, and apply to it the same requisitions, and there is scarcely a fact of ancient or modern times which would not be resolved into a fiction or a myth. Take, for example, the account given by different writers of the length of Alexander the Great's reign. One says he reigned twelve years. another thirteen, another thirty-five. Now, if we adopt the skeptic's method of dealing with the New Testament, we must conclude that the illustrious Macedonian never reigned at all. One author says that John Milton was born in 1606, one in 1608, and one in 1609. Was there no such person, then, as John Milton? One historian says, that at the battle of Bunker's hill, "the British moved to the attack with rattling drums, and incessant discharges of muskets and great guns!" but another says—"they came stealing on, as

silent as the grave." Moreover, what historians usually call "the battle of Bunker's Hill," did not take place on Bunker's, but on Breed's Hill.* Was there no such battle, then? Does that tall granite monument perpetuate a mere legend? Was it reared upon romance? It is no more palpable than that solid monument of Christianity which stands before us to-day.

Now, in any other circumstances, such objections would be regarded as quibbles; and yet the skeptic urges them as valid arguments against the New Testament. I style such a method *unfair*, therefore, and indicative not of open inquiry but of obstinate theory. The Bible is not to be judged in all respects like a history composed since history became a science; but take that old volume, which has survived the decay of ages and the shocks of revolution, whose every book is an epoch, whose every leaf almost turns over a century, and whose simple narratives open to us the experience and link us to the sympathies of our common nature four thousand years ago; take it, and apply to its records the same tests you apply to Polybius or Livy, and the skeptic, if his skepticism is honest, will find less room for his cavils and his sneers.

In the second place, I object to the *dogmatism* of the skeptic. Sifting his assertions, in many instances they amount essentially to this—that he will believe in nothing wonderful—nothing that transcends his philosophy. His course with the miracles is a fair illustration of this. He will not believe them because they are out-

* See Thayer on Infidelity.

side his experience, and he says, "a violation of the laws of nature." Now this position is altogether dogmatic and unwarranted. In the first place, the skeptic makes his experience the test of all possibility ; and, in the next place, he virtually assumes that he is acquainted with all the laws of nature. Yet, while it is true that a miracle demands greater evidence than an ordinary occurrence, the united experience of the race cannot demonstrate the impossibility of such a thing. Singularly enough, Hume, who presses this argument of experience against miracles as an unbroken testimony in the past, subtilely urges the fact that we cannot make that experience valid for a single conclusion in the future. We can give no reason, he says, why because bread has nourished us to-day, it should do so to-morrow. But if it is possible that this chain of experience *may* be interrupted, is it not possible that it *has* been ? It is simply a question of evidence, and yet, while he is forced to admit this, the secret ground of the skeptic is, that no amount of evidence would induce him to believe a miracle. But is it not the grossest assumption for any man to look abroad through the universe, and say that nothing can take place except according to the usual order ? If he believes in a God, will he maintain that the Creator cannot touch the springs of His own mechanism ? Or will he say that the Infinite One Himself is bound to just that method which science has observed ? Can he say that a miracle is a violation of those laws ? It may supersede any known law—but does he know every law ? Who shall say that the laws of nature *were* violated, when the sick

were healed at a word, or the blind by a touch ? This may have been merely the suppression of the common process, and the inlet of a higher method.

But what, after all, do we mean by "*laws* of nature ?" We mean nothing more than the way in which God usually works in the material world—we mean merely the observed methods of His Will in physical things. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a law of nature. No actual entities standing between God and His manifestations in the physical universe. He fills that universe. He touches it at every point. Its life is but the pulsation of His Omnipresence ; its phenomena are only the attitudes of His thought. Shall we say, then, that He can never shift His method—that the Master can touch but one string of his instrument ? Can he not, at will, run his swift hand across the chords, making the cause and the sequence one ? Can He not speak, and it shall be done—command, and it shall stand fast ? In such a case, the law of nature is not violated but varied by Him who is Himself that Law. Moreover, we are profoundly ignorant of *processes*. In the last analysis, we can give no reason why medicine should cure a fever any more than a word—why the blind eye should obey the science of the oculist any more than the touch of a finger. The only answer that can be given in any instance is—"It is God's will ;" and no man who believes in a God at all will deem this answer irrelevant. Nor will any one who considers the limitations of human knowledge, who realizes the wonder in which he is embosomed, and the unseen forces of the universe, deny the possibility

of a miracle simply upon the ground of his experience or his philosophy of nature. And yet this dogmatical ground is the radical support of skepticism in this respect. Let it be given up, and the miracles of the New Testament would stand, where every enlightened Christian would have them stand—upon their specific credibility. But now, no amount of internal or external evidence can shake the obstinate incredulity which will not believe because it has never seen, or because such belief requires faith in something broader than it knows.

In fact, the sources of this skepticism are fed by a sentiment quite common in human nature, which opposes the admission of anything surpassing its routine of thought and knowledge. In every-day life, there is a class of men who, upon the broaching of any strange fact or theory, shrug their shoulders and toss out an expression of incredulity or contempt. That this does not always indicate shrewdness and intelligence, but sometimes narrowness and ignorance, I need not say. While the enlightened mind jumps to no hasty conclusions, applies sound and candid tests, and holds its decision in abeyance to reason, it knows too well, the truth of the poet's assertion, that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy," to assume at once a dogmatic unbelief. There are men in the world to whose vision, if we judge by their assumptions, the universe lies compact and open ; for they repudiate every transcendent suggestion, and act as if they expected to learn nothing more. Sailing upon this little ball of earth through

an infinite ocean of mystery, shut in by a thin film from countless suns of being—one would think that the invisible forces of nature, the secrets of the underworld, and the treasures of the far-reaching firmament, were all published in the newspapers, or packed and labeled along the streets through which they walk, and in the rooms where they eat and sleep. Until mankind at large are startled out of this vulgar assumption and materialism, we offer too much verge for the skeptic, who, like Thomas, will not believe unless he can see, and touch, and handle, and who is so strongly rooted in his prepossessions that, it is probable, he would find some excuse for maintaining them even though one should rise from the dead.

But, again ; the skeptic, as I think, errs in the exclusive authority which he ascribes to the *intellect*. He will believe in nothing that cannot be logically demonstrated. But while it may be true that as to all our conclusions we must have the correspondence or ratification of reason, we should live but meagerly indeed, if we cherished and did nothing but what the intellect can distinctly grasp. Mystery is involved with our most familiar acts, and our confidence, in a thousand instances, reaches far beyond the direct lines of reason. We have faculties for apprehending knowledge other than those which deal with physical and mathematical realities. The intercourse of hearth and home, the relations of child and mother, and brother and friend, are not deductions of logic. Let any father undertake to prove by logical concatenation that he loves his son. Let us endeavor to probe the human heart¹

with sharp scientific analysis, and to define its sympathies. These things cannot be expressed in propositions. They elude our grasp. They refuse to be gauged by our measure. And yet, the human heart *knows* that it loves ; we trust to the sanctities of home ; the child rests in its mother's arms as confidently as the philosopher rests upon the laws of the universe. Moreover, we deal constantly with inexplicable realities. In every step we take, in every transaction, reason is mingled with faith ; and even as to this busy, work-day world, the sphere of the latter is as ample, and as much confided in as the sphere of sight. The conclusions of faith and of the affections, then, are considered as legitimate as the conclusions of logic. The skeptic accepts them as such, every hour he lives, so far as earthly things are concerned. But the moment he comes in contact with spiritual statements, he demands that everything shall be strained through the menstruum of his brain, or be seen in clear outline upon the horizon. He does not believe in a God, because intellectually he cannot conceive His Infinity. He does not believe in immortality, because he has never seen one rise from the dead. Faith and intuition are good evidences upon ordinary points, but when religion presents its supersensual realities, his arrogant reason exclaims—"Except I can see, and touch, and intensify under my own lens, I will not believe." What I claim from the skeptic is, the exercise of his *whole nature* upon the matters of religion ; not in order that he may believe things contrary to his understanding, but things too deep for its measurement, too lofty for its

reach—things which his understanding, acting in harmony with all his powers, acknowledges when presented, but which of itself it cannot demonstrate. But now in the isolation of his clear, cold intellect, the skeptic abides in a glacial and spectral universe. No glow from the affections lights up the frost and shadow of the grave. He feels no prophecy in the thrill of the human heart, in the incompleteness of nature. He believes merely in things tangible, and sees only in the day-time. He will not confess the authenticity of that paler light of faith which was meant to shine when the sunshine of reason falls short, and the firmament of mystery is over our heads.

And yet there is a close alliance between skepticism and *superstition*. For, if the skeptic is not certain that supersensual realities do exist, neither does he know that they do not exist. And often you will see the man who contemns the Bible, and rejects the notion of immortality, summoning a weird horror from the great abyss of the unknown, dealing in magic, trusting in charms, and expecting communications from departed spirits. For man is so constituted that he must believe in something supersensual. He knows that the limited experience of mortality cannot be all ; that the universe is prolific ; that regions of being must lie all about him, far beyond the scope of his earthly vision. And, rejecting that steady light which streams upon us from revelation, he builds up some abnormal and fantastic creed. In fact, the enlightened Christian is the true philosopher. If we would be free from the perplexities of superstition, and from the fanaticism of

credulity, if we would tread upon the solid earth, and carry a calm and steady intellect, we must accept those statements which come to us upon the authority of Jesus. Otherwise, we are at the mercy of every new suggestion. We know not where we are, nor whither we are drifting. We know not whether we are in the hands of God, or of demons. To-day, we believe that we shall die as brutes—to-morrow, that our souls will transmigrate. We know not what spectre from the mysterious deep will start out upon us. And a worse result than this pertains to the skeptical mood. It unsettles the grounds of all moral action. In some fit of melancholy, in the bitterness of disappointment, or upon some extraordinary revelation of human selfishness, it moves us to deny that there is any such thing as virtue, and makes the difference between it and vice to be merely one of convenience. Now, it publishes the code of self-indulgence and laps us in a voluptuous Epicureanism; and anon, it holds up the rigid and impossible ideal of the Stoic, or ascetic. And it will be seen, after all, that Christianity furnishes the only foundation of a harmonious and rational life. While it pours upon this world the light of another, it also burns away those ghastly and distorting mists which evolve from the depths of unguided speculation, and is as unfavorable to superstition, as it is to atheism. It urges a code of duty, strict yet simple; fitted to beings of earthly mould, yet of immortal destiny.

Doubtless, were we to probe the grounds of skepticism, we might find there *dislike to religion*—to its duties and sacrifices—as a potent cause of unbelief.

But, leaving this as a bare suggestion, I will make one or two isolated criticisms, and close.

I remark, then, that often skepticism appears as a system of dialectic convenience. The skeptic does not profess any belief, and so easily shifts his ground. When hard pressed upon one point, he nimbly jumps to another, and when cramped between both, he maintains that he neither denies nor affirms. Now, I have already spoken against precipitate conclusions. I have urged the claim of reason over credulity. I have commended a due weighing and sifting of evidence. But, surely the man who in this world sticks to nothing, may be suspected of hollow-heartedness. He appears as one who amuses himself with the universe, instead of working out its problems. He is a skillful fencer, and not a true warrior in the battle of life, and causes us to feel that the downright fanatic is nearer to the heart of things than the cool and slippery disputant.

And, again, it is to be objected to skepticism, that it has never accomplished anything. It has never founded empires, established principles, or changed the world's heart. The great *doers* in history have always been men of *faith*.

At least, we may say of skepticism, that it only *tears down*. The skeptic topples into ruins the fabric which has sheltered me, and where I have found peace, and turns me out into the region of doubt and of bleak necessity. As Carlyle says of Voltaire, he has "a torch for burning, but no hammer for building." But this was never meant to be so. It is not in analogy with the universe, in which destruction is but the transition

to higher development. Man is a being of affections and desires, but the skeptic plucks from him all upon which these affections rest, or that satisfies his desire, and leaves him empty-handed to contend with the problems of existence. And all this because our knowledge is incomplete—because the objects of our trust are not entirely in sight. I would say, though I cannot see the whole, leave me the portions that I do see. Let me stand upon them, islands as they are in the mist-wrapped ocean of being. I gain nothing by leaping from them blindly into the deep. Nay, would not many say, even if Christianity is a delusion, leave us that delusion? It is better than the emptiness of skepticism. Though I may be doomed to annihilation, I shall at least never know that I have been mocked. If the grave be all, let me *think* that I see beyond it. Though God in reality be far from me, let me trust that I can commune with him. Though your clear intellect discerns no supersensual good, let me still harbor among the suggestions of affection and of faith. Let me still be one of that great company—that long procession of those who have marched to the land of shadows, who for thousands of years have prayed and hoped, and who in all have found religion to be an uplifting influence and a healing balm. Let me be among those trusting fathers, those loving mothers, those confiding children, who have endured the trials, and shared the joys of earth, mixing all with their belief in better realities, and who in dying-chambers have laid them calmly down, with their religion,

“Not dreaming that it was a dream.”

Nay, let me accord with the lofty natures that have soared and sung, and yet in their noblest discoveries, in their richest floods of inspiration, have found nothing to shake their tenderest trust. Let me live in the faith of apostles ; let me fall asleep in the confidence of martyrs. Let me be with these, O skeptic, in their delusion, rather than with you in your refutation and denial. Let me be with these until you can give me something better.

But, my friends, to most of us, I presume, Christianity is not a delusion. Though we have not seen, we believe. Though we have not touched the bodily form of Jesus, nor thrust our hands in his wounded side, yet we have faith in his actual existence and living spirit. We acknowledge a God. We give our assent to the great claims and sanctions of duty. We believe that though this body shall drop to ashes, the soul shall go beaming upward like a star. But of what use is this belief without corresponding action ? What better is a formal Christianity than an avowed rejection of it ? Surely, far better is that intellectual skepticism which, like Thomas, will honestly follow its convictions, than that moral skepticism which, while we cry out with our lips—"My Lord and my God !" leaves us still indolent and faithless.

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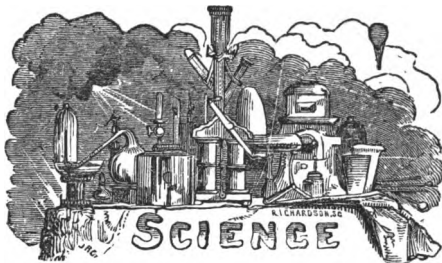
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